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HUSAIN, THE SHIITE SAVIOR
AN ANALYSIS OF THE MUHARRAM COMMEMORATION

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PREFACE

The aim of this study is to present a unified picture of the several elements which combine to form the Shiite Muharram commemoration of the death of Imam Husain. This aim includes more, however, than a presentation in descriptive form of the external aspects of the Muharram; the hope is that some degree of real understanding of this important religious observance may be achieved.

Probably few dissertations have been written without some feeling of reservation by the author, and this dissertation is no exception. Aside from the usual shortcomings caused by research limitations and deadlines which had to be met, there have been difficulties connected with this study which are more uniquely its own. Chief among these is the lack of Shiite theological and devotional material, which is available to us in English translation. This means that the findings of this study have been based upon a relatively few Shiite documents, with the consequent reduction of their usefulness as valid generalizations. But, over and above these material shortages, there is the uncertainty that springs from the doubt that one can do full justice to the Shiite point of view. Expressions of religious experience, whether conceptual, cultic, or sociological, have to be viewed from the "inside" if they are to be properly understood. That is why it is of vital importance to know what the Shiites, themselves, have had to say about this aspect of their religious life. Foreign observers may

accurately record the religious phenomenon, but totally misconstrue the religious significance it holds for those who stand within the "faith."

The desirability of including in this study an evaluation of the Muharram from a Christian standpoint has been rejected by the author. A cursory evaluation can easily be made by the reader, while an examination of the fundamental relationship of one religious tradition to another requires profounder and more detailed treatment than the subject has received in this essay.

The author wishes to take this opportunity to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to those persons who have guided his initial steps in the exploration of Christianity and Islam. Among them are Dr. Nabia Abbott and Dr. G. E. Von Grunebaum, both of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, and Dr. Joachim Wach, Professor of History of Religions in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. Professor Wach's friendly encouragement has constantly functioned as a source of inspiration.

Appreciation is expressed, also, to Dr. Edwin E. Calverley, of the Hartford Seminary Foundation, for making available several volumes of The Muslim Review from the Case Memorial Library.

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S. E. Brush

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INTRODUCTION

Every year, during the month of Muharram, the first month in the Muslim calendar, Shiites[1] from Turkey and the Caucasus to India celebrate a great religious festival. The observance is held in commemoration of Imam Husain and his small band of followers, who were killed by the forces of the Umayyad caliph, Yazîd, on the plain of Kerbela in A.D. 680 (A.H. 61). This commemoration covers the first ten days of Muharram, with the climax coming on âshûrâ, the tenth day. During this time all normal activity ceases. Only the needs of daily life and the burial of the dead are attended to, while the death of the "Chief of Martyrs" and his entourage is celebrated in poetry, in drama, in processions, and in a host of other special religious observances. As a Christian missionary to Persia has put it, these people are "Husain crazy." This observation, said in respect and heard in the context of the first ten days of Muharram, is amply borne out, for then unchecked rein is given to the deepest religious passions of millions of human hearts.

It will be the purpose of this study to examine the Muharram celebration and the chief figure of its religious emotion, Imam Husain, in the light of his role as the Savior of the Shiites. The sources will be Shiite creedal statements of doctrine, popular literature in use during Muharram, certain writings of the new Shiite

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[1]Pronounced Shee-ite.

school in India, and observations made by a number of Western travelers in the Middle East.

A Survey of Muharram Studies

It might be well, at this point, to consider briefly how this particular aspect of Islamic studies came into existence in the West.

James Morier, a British diplomatic observer and traveler in Persia during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, was the first European writer to include a description of the ta'ziya, or "passion play," in an account of the Muharram celebration. Morier was in Tehran in February, 1809, and made a note of this unusual religious event:

> We were invited by the Zemindars (Indian officers) of the Envoy's guard to see that part of the ceremony of the Moharem which was appropriate to the day. We ascended to the elevated platform, surrounded by a great crowd of Persians and Indians, and seated ourselves on Nummuds prepared for us. On one side was a small ornamented temple, in which was represented the tomb of the Imaum [Husain]; and all around it were the Indians who had changed their regimentals for a variety of fantastical habits. . . . After this, a Persian Mollah [religious teacher] ascended a temporary pulpit and commenced a species of chaunted sermon proper for the day. At the end of every period he was answered in chorus by the multitude: and when he was nearly at the end, and had reached the most pathetic part of his harangue, he gave the signal for the people to beat their breasts, which they did accordingly with much seeming sincerity, keeping time to his chaunting. . . . Next, on a small temporary stage, appeared several figures, who acted that part of the tragedy of the history of the Imaum appointed for that day. . . . The actors each held in their hands their speeches written on paper, which they read with great action and vociferation, and excited much interest in their audience, so that many sobbed and wept aloud.[1]

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[1]James Morier, A Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople in the Years 1808 and 1809 (London: Longman, 1812), p. 195.

On the following night Morier had the opportunity to observe the dramatic presentation of the events surrounding the murder of Husain, himself. The heroes of the play were treated with great villainy, and Morier noted that the spectators manifested signs of being deeply moved. He suspected, however, that it was not affected with complete sincerity:

> All this scene produced great lamentation among the spectators, who seemed to vie with each other in the excess of their weeping, and in display of all the signs of grief. The Prime Minister cried incessantly; and Ameen-ed-Dowlah covered his face with both his hands, and groaned aloud; Mohamed Hussein Khan Mervee made at intervals very vociferous complaints. In some I could perceive real tears stealing down their cheeks, but in most I suspect that the grief was as much a piece of acting as was the tragedy that excited it. The King himself always cries at the ceremony; his servants therefore are obliged to imitate him.[1]

Several years later, while on a second journey through Persia, Morier witnessed the Muharram celebration again. His account of what he saw, as given in this second volume, is written in much greater detail, and is further elucidated with some remarks giving the historical background of the commemoration.[2]

It was in this manner that the ta'ziya first became known to Western orientalists. However, the Shiite Muharram had been known in Europe long before. In 1637 Olearius had spent the month of Muharram at Ardabil, and wrote "a very full description of all that he saw, the mournings, wailing, lamentations and cuttings,"[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 196.

[2] James Morier, A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople between the Years 1810 and 1816 (London: Longman, 1818).

[3] Edward G. Browne, A Literary History of Persia (Cambridge: The University Press, 1928), Vol. IV, p. 29.

Some seventy years later S. Ockley's History of the Saracens (London, 1708) was published, in which the Shiite celebration was reported. Gibbon utilized Ockley's volume in the writing of his own great work, which commenced in 1776, and in which he has made the following well-known comment:

> In a distant age and clime [Eighteenth century England] the tragic scene of the death of Hosein will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader. On the annual festival of his martyrdom, in the devout pilgrimage to his sepulchre, his Persian votaries abandon their souls to the religious frenzy of sorrow and indignation.[1]

Interest in the Muharram celebration received considerable impetus with the publication of Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale (Paris, 1865). Count Gobineau, the author, had been French minister at Tehran for a number of years and had interested himself in the religious life of the Persians. He saw in the ta'ziya a dramatic performance of high quality, ranking with Greek drama and superior to Latin, English, French, and German drama. These latter, in comparison to the ta'ziya--a play which occupies the whole life of the people--are mere pastimes. In addition to his description of the ta'ziya, Gobineau performed the service of rendering some of the scenes into translation.

Matthew Arnold was caught up in the spell of Gobineau's report of this strange religious drama, produced:

> . . . Far away in that wonderful East, from which, whatever airs of superiority Europe may justly give itself, all our religion has come, and where religion, of some sort or

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[1]Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (London: W. Allason et al., 1818), Vol. IX, pp. 346-347. In a note, Gibbon mentions that "the festival of the death of Hosein is amply described by Sir John Chardin, a Traveller whom I have often praised."

other, has still an empire over men's feelings such as it has nowhere else.[1]

Arnold seems to have been the first Western writer to point out the great similarity between the ta'ziya and the annual German Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau:

> To me it seems that the Persian tazyas--for so these pieces are called--find a better parallel in the Ammergau Passion Play than in the Greek drama. They turn entirely on one subject--the sufferings of the Family of the Tent, as the Imam Hussein and the company of persons gathered around him at Kerbela are called.[2]

It was the good fortune of orientalists to have had produced within the space of a year two more translations of many of the ta'ziya episodes. A. Chodzko translated thirty-three of these scenes into French and published them under the title, Théâtre persan (Paris, 1878).[3] At the same time, an official in the British legation at Tehran, who was later Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Sir Lewis Pelly, was collecting and translating thirty-seven such episodes. These were issued in a two-volume set, The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain.[4]

It became evident that Western interest in the ta'ziya was taking on a two-sided character. While the performance was primarily a cultic manifestation of Shiite piety, some scholars began to study it purely as drama. The majority of these usually came to the conclusion that the ta'ziya is bad theater, it being with-

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[1]Matthew Arnold, "A Persian Passion Play," Essays in Criticism (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1903), pp. 246-247.

[2]Ibid., p. 255.

[3]These are listed in Appendix III.

[4]These are also listed in Appendix III.

out any of the refinements of a highly developed art form. Lane-Poole, who has unkind things to say about the ta'ziya as theater, shows the proper point of view, when he writes: "Plotless, characterless, full of iteration, of a length unbearable, the play must be judged by other than literary standards."[1]

As the nineteenth century drew to a close and the intercourse between the Middle East and Europe increased rapidly, material on the Muharram celebration became available in much greater quantities. Almost every volume of travels and memoirs dealing with this part of the world contained many paragraphs, if not whole chapters, describing this aspect of Shiite religious life.

Additional ta'ziya texts were made available after the turn of the century. Ivar Lassy published material he had gathered from among the Shiites of the Caucasus under the title, The Muharrem Mysteries (Helsingfors, 1916). In the next decade Wilhelm Litten presented the untranslated Persian texts of fifteen ta'ziya episodes in his volume, Das Drama in Persien (Berlin, 1929).[2] These manuscripts were collected by Litten during his residence as a German consular official in Tehran.

Our remarks thus far have referred to the Muharram celebration in Persia. Although the commemoration is observed by the large Shiite community in India, it lacks that single element there, which has served to bring the observance to the attention of orientalists, the ta'ziya, in a well developed form. In India the term, ta'ziya,

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[1]Stanley Lane-Poole, Studies in a Mosque (2d ed.; London: Eden, Remington & Co., 1893), p. 251.

[2]These are listed in Appendix III.

is used, but it refers to the replica of the tomb of Husain, otherwise called, tâbût. The two earliest detailed descriptions of the Indian Muharram were published in 1832. In Observations on the Mussulmans of India Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali treated the commemoration celebrated in the Lucknow area of North India, while Ja'far Sharîf recorded the customs of the Hyderabad Shiites in the book which was translated and edited by G. A. Herklots, Qânûn-i-Islâm.

The contemporary situation with regard to Western study of Muharram and the ta'ziya is one in which most of the material written is being produced by Christian missions to Persia and India. The parallel between Shiite beliefs about Husain and Christian concepts of the soteriological role of Christ is quite obvious, and it has received a great deal of attention. Periodicals such as The Muslim World, whose contributors often are missionaries or persons intimately connected with the missionary enterprise, contain many articles of interest for a study of Imam Husain and Muharram.[1]

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[1]The term "Muharram" will be used in this dissertation in reference to the entire commemoration ceremony. When the name of the month is meant, it will be so indicated in the text.

CHAPTER I

THE SAVIOR AS A RELIGIOUS TYPE

The study of the history of religions reveals that the Savior has played an important role in the religious life of mankind. He is the individual to whom men have looked for salvation, whatever the particular form this salvation might take. It is clear, therefore, that Imam Husain does not stand as an isolated figure of a unique soteriological significance, but as a Savior, who shares certain common characteristics with the other Saviors of the religions of the world.

The Nostalgia Religions

The Savior as a religious type is most clearly delineated in those religions which Von Grunebaum has termed nostalgia religions.[1] This classification embraces most of the religions which arose in the thousand year period from Alexander the Great (336 B.C.) to the death of Muhammad (A.D. 632). These include the Mysteries, Gnosticism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam.

Of fundamental importance in these religions is the belief that the essence of man takes the form of his soul. Even though the soul is united with the material body, it does not belong to the world. It is in the world but not part of it. Instead, the

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[1]For an elaboration of the concept of nostalgia religion see Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, "Islam and Hellenism," Scientia, XLIV (January, 1950), 21-27.

soul is destined to return to the "land" of its origin, where it was in close association with God. In order to insure this return, it must spend its life in correct "action."

The value placed upon history varies considerably in the nostalgia religions. The most optimistic judgment about history involves the belief that it is good, but only temporary, while on the other end of the scale it is held that the world is evil, unclean, and contaminating. Material existence is a "prison" for the soul, whose spark of divinity must be rescued by purification and re-birth.

Man, himself, is like a person asleep. He is unconscious of the true nature of his situation until he is awakened to these realities. Because of this, he cannot save himself from destruction.

It is for the purpose of salvation that God sends his divine agent to rescue man. The Savior penetrates to the world to call out God's own people. But in order to accomplished his mission, the Savior has to make some sacrifice to sin and achieve a victory over the forces hostile to life.

The Savior as a Charismatic Individual

Both Max Weber and Rudolph Otto have written extensively on the subject of charisma, and much of this material is of importance in constructing a Savior typology.[1] We can do no better but

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[1]Max Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946); Rudolph Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, trans. F. V. Filson and B. L. Woolf (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1938).

re-state what these two scholars have written.

Weber has stated that charisma is of two basic types; personal charisma, which attaches to individuals as such, and official charisma, which is attached to an office or social position and, as a consequence, to the person who holds it. The charisma of the Savior is of the personal type, in that he possesses "gifts" which are uniquely his. These gifts include the capacity for psychic and spiritual experiences of a distinctive kind, heightened talents for discernment and guidance, and the ability to wield psychic influence over other persons, which far surpasses the limits of normal experience. This last gift involves the processes of the will of his followers, whose duty it becomes to follow the Savior. This leadership demand by the Savior is natural, since his authority is not derived from his followers.

It should be pointed out here that due to the Shiite institution of the Imamate, the charisma of Husain has elements of official charisma, in addition to his great personal charisma.

The individual with personal charisma stands outside of the normal institutional patterns of society. He is controlled by his own inner restraints and his own scale of values. As a consequence, he either functions as a founder of new institutions and values, or so reconstructs the old as to make them new.

An important part of charisma is the charismatic milieu. This is so because the success of the leader is dependent upon the positive response of his followers. For these followers, the master must actually <u>be</u> the God-willed leader. This importance of the real, not imagined, character of charisma is stressed by Otto:

> [Charisma] is not the product of a sociological and collective phantasy, but a type of experience and existence which--no matter how much phantasy producing legend may constantly expand and enhance it--actually occurs in real men.[1]

In the characteristic charismatic milieu, the charisma passes over from the leader to those associated with him. This makes possible the transcendental experiences which are reported in the form of miracles. These include such things as the experience of healing, charismatic apparitio, and the like.

The Savior in Theology

It is important to understand that theological statements concerning the Savior must be interpreted functionally. Theology, in this case, is the attempt to conceptualize the central experience of religious value associated with the Savior in the life of the believer. The judgment as to whether or not any particular Savior is truly the Savior of God is a decision that can only be made in faith by the believer. But it is incumbent upon the student of religion to take this claim seriously in an attempt to understand the material with which he is working.

Otto and G. Van der Leeuw have contributed to an understanding of the theology of Saviorhood.[2] Although Otto's writing is more normative than descriptive in its emphasis, it is very important for the typological method.

Otto has pointed out that the Savior stands as the central

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[1]Otto, The Kingdom of God, p. 337.

[2]Otto, op. cit. and The Idea of the Holy, trans. J. W. Harvey (2d ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 50-59; G. Van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, trans. J. E. Turner (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1938), pp. 106-113, 666-667.

fact of religious experience, being that which most clearly reveals the Numen to the believer. The reaction in the believer to any revelation of this kind is a profound "creature-feeling," involving the complete submergence and diminution of the self into nothingness. This feeling is on a deeper level than that of moral inadequacy, although a parallel between these two does exist. Moral inadequacy turns into "creature-feeling" when guilt turns into pollution and remorse turns into self-loathing. These terms reveal the full depth of the nature of sin; a state of being which cannot be understood on the moralistic and rationalistic level.

The Savior functions as the "atonement" (covering) against the Numen. He consecrates the believer, who is thus made fit to enter into the presence of God by bestowing upon the believer some of his (the Savior's) numinous qualities. This comes as a gift of grace to the believer; being far more than can be accomplished by sincere moral effort, since the moral demands of God are infinite and beyond all human achievement.

Theology tells the religious story of the soteriological career of the Savior in what Van der Leeuw has called the Savior Myth. There are several important elements in this story.

The first element is that of birth and epiphany; these two often being identified. The initial appearance of the Savior in the world is of a miraculous nature. Occasionally it takes the form of a supernatural birth of the child by a divine father and a human mother. Such ideas are common in the Mediterranean world.

The second important element is the deed of salvation. This consists of overcoming the forces of evil and often bears the stamp

of combat. Often, too, the death of the Savior, himself, is connected with this deed, but the death is never permanent.

The next important element in the story is that of resurrection and parousia. As with birth and epiphany, these two are often identified. They refer to the final days, during which all men are raised to stand before the judgment seat of God. Many Saviors remain concealed until now, when they emerge to mediate for their followers and bring them into their salvation.

Finally, the Savior is often conceived of as being pre-existent; as having existed before all time. His appearance in the world occurs when his "time is fulfilled," in accordance with the plan of God.

In concluding this discussion of the Savior in theology, an obvious fact should be made explicit. That is the fact that we are dealing here with a religious phenomenon, and that to attempt to find meaning in the Savior Myth by itself is to misunderstand the true nature of it. An adequate treatment of the Savior Myth must start with the religious experience of the believer, and then move on to a consideration of how the experience has been conceptualized. Theology, taken alone, is not religion.

Worship of the Savior

The cultic and sociological elements of Savior-worship are of utmost importance. It is in this context that the strongest religious emotion of the believer is often expressed, as he participates with his fellow believers in celebrating the glorious fact of Saviorhood.

The sacred calendar is filled with the anniversaries of crucial events in the life of the Savior, while the ritual dramatizes the Sacred Myth. Every ritualistic device can be brought into use, such as processions, the dance and dramatization, the reiteration of the Myth, and many other acts.

All this calls out a very profound response from the believer. Often this response is of a standardized character, but this does not necessarily restrict the sincerity of the feeling involved.

These brief remarks conclude the discussion of a Savior typology. In the next chapter the historical aspects of Muharram will be taken up. Following that, in reverse order as given in this typology, will be found a description of the cultic and sociological aspects of Muharram, to be followed, in turn, by an analysis of the theological aspects of the belief in the Saviorhood of Husain.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF MUHARRAM

The historical events which constitute the basis for the commemoration of Muharram, if interpreted strictly, are those which transpired on the Plain of Kerbela during the first ten days of the month of Muharram in the year A.D. 680. Of these ten days, the most important is the final day, the tenth of Muharram, which was the day on which Husain was killed. However, in order to obtain an adequate understanding of the significance of this violent occurance, it is necessary to know the circumstances under which the conflicts, which disrupted the internal security of Islam, arose. We turn, therefore, to a consideration of the rise of the Party of 'Alî.

The Shiite Schism

The problem which proved to be the most difficult to solve for the early Muslim community was that of leadership. Muhammad had died without formally providing for his successor, and, as a consequence, the situation in which the Muslims found themselves was one in which sharp controversy was possible. Such a conflict could be avoided as long as there were powerful and influential Companions available, whose leadership would be acknowledged by nearly everyone. This was the case with Abû Bakr and 'Umar, the first two caliphs. These two were universally recognized. Their

status as caliph was determined by election. This principle of election was sound, because an effective consensus could be reached during these early years.

It was during the caliphate of 'Uthman b. 'Affan, who succeeded 'Umar in A.D. 644, that the succession conflict broke out into open violence. Brockelmann suggests that 'Uthman, who was the weakest of the candidates for the office, was chosen in the hope that he would be amenable to the wishes of some of the younger and stronger leaders.[1] If such was the case, 'Uthman proved by his actions that the hope was ill founded.

The chief factor in 'Uthman's disfavor was his family, the Umayyads. This family, under the leadership of Abû Sufyan, had provided the strongest opposition to Muhammad in Mecca. Their acceptance of Islam had been relatively late, in comparison with the early affiliation of many converts in Medina. Upon the Umayyad's acceptance of Islam, they had received many concessions, and the continued rise to power of this family was bound to meet with a growing opposition. When 'Uthman put his policies into operation, it became evident that the triumph of the Umayyads was about complete. He did not hesitate to replace heroes of the early conquest with members of his own family, as happened in Egypt. Kinsmen were appointed to all the important governorships, and the management of his own affairs in Medina was left to a relative. The stage was set for a popular reaction.

It happened in June, 656. An unruly mob stoned the caliph

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[1]Carl Brockelmann, History of the Islamic Peoples, trans. Joel Carmichael and Moshe Perlmann (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), p. 67.

as he delivered the traditional Friday sermon in the mosque at Medina. 'Uthman was carried unconscious to his house. The agitation continued, with the demand that the caliph abdicate. This he refused to do. At length the mob broke into the house, and 'Uthman was murdered as he sat reading the Koran.

The office of caliph now came into the possession of 'Alî, husband of the Prophet's daughter, Fâtima, and father of two sons, Hasan and Husain. 'Alî was the popular choice for caliph. He had taken part in the military campaigns of the early expansion of Islam, had once been the leader of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and had conducted public prayers. He took the oath of office on the day of the murder of 'Uthman.

This was a triumph for the Shi'at 'Alî, the Party of 'Alî, which had been conducting a legitimist agitation. 'Alî's partisans disagreed with the principle of an elective caliphate; maintaining, on the other hand, that the rightful leadership of Islam lay within the family of the Prophet. The only candidate who could thus qualify was the husband of Fâtima. The adherents of the legitimist cause promulgated these views with a great deal of passion.

The caliphate of 'Alî stands at the rise of the great schism in Islam. 'Alî ranks as the fourth caliph of orthodox (Sunnite) Islam, but he is the first imâm of the Shiites. The latter hold that the three earlier caliphs had held that office illegitimately, and to the present day Abû Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman are cursed.

Opposition to 'Alî was represented by three separate groups. The first of these was the faction headed by Talhah and Zubair, two other candidates for the caliphate, who, with 'Alî, had been in-

strumental in inciting the mob to take violent action against the hated 'Uthman. Talhah and Zubair were joined by Aishah, "Mother of the Believers," in opposing 'Alî, but this faction was defeated by the caliph in an encounter known as the Battle of the Camel.

The strongest opponent to the caliph was the Umayyad governor of Syria, Mu'âwiya. He had assumed the role of 'Uthman's avenger, and made it clear that the only way in which 'Alî could clear himself of complicity in the assassination would be for him to produce and punish the culprits. 'Alî could not do this. After sparring at a distance, the forces of the caliph and the governor met at Siffin, a Syrian border town on the banks of the Euphrates, in the spring of 657. The negotiations were prolonged and unsuccessful, and the battle was joined. It seemed that the troops of 'Alî would prevail, but, at the last moment, a truce was arranged and it was agreed by both parties that the issue should be settled on the basis of a reading of the Koran. This decision proved to be disastrous for 'Alî. Contrary to his expectations, it was decided to declare both men unfit to rule. This meant that 'Alî would lose everything, since Mu'âwiya had, as yet, made no claim to the caliphate. Moreover, both men had been treated as equals in the deliberations, with the resulting loss of prestige for 'Alî. Therefore, he had no other choice but to break his oath to abide by the agreement of the Koran "reciters."

When the results of these negotiations became known, a large group of 'Alî's followers left his camp and elected their own caliph. It is not within the range of this study to duscuss this secessionist group, known as the Kharijites, except to say that in

661, as 'Alî was preparing to worship in the mosque at Kûfa, he was stabbed to death by an adherent of this sect.

Mu'âwiya was now the most powerful figure in the empire. He set about securing the caliphate for himself, and in the process effectively eliminated the eldest son of 'Alî and Fâtima, Hasan, as a candidate by making a financial settlement with him, which permitted him to retire from public life with a large income.

But in spite of the efforts of the caliph at Damascus and his generals, the empire was not peacefully secure.

The Death of Husain

With this historical background in mind, we come to the events surrounding the death of Husain, the third Shiite imâm; Hasan being the second.

Mu'âwiya was wise enough in political matters to see that stability for the caliphate could only be assured, in the absence of strong traditional controls, by binding all possible candidates to his son, Yazîd, with an oath of allegiance. Husain refused to take this oath, and, for his own protection, had to flee to the sanctuary of Mecca.

Mu'âwiya's death occured in 680, and Yazîd became caliph, according to his father's plan. The change of caliphs was viewed by strong rebellious forces in the province of Iraq as an opportunity for revolt. The cities of Basra and Kûfa were particularly affected by the agitation. In the former, a strong governor, 'Ubaidallâh, put down the uprising, but the authorities in Kûfa met with less success. The rebellious Kufans, who were predominatly Shiite, needed leadership, and it was decided to call upon the

son of 'Alî, Husain, to furnish it.

The accounts of what happened next are not in agreement. The Muslim historians vary in their evaluation of the events in accordance with their sectarian affiliation. Because of its bearing upon this study, both versions will be given here.

Lammens has written a version of this history which probably represents the opinion of Western scholarship on the matter. It will become clear that it also represents the Sunnite viewpoint. This, in brief, is what Lammens writes.[1]

Husain decided to listen to the appeal from Kûfa, but, before taking personal action, he thought it best to test how matters stood by sending his cousin, Muslim b. 'Aqîl, to that city. Upon Muslim's arrival, thousands of Shiites flocked to swear allegiance to Husain. Muslim sent word back to Mecca that Husain should come at once to Kûfa and take personal charge of the movement.

While the message was on the way to Mecca, 'Ubaidallâh arrived in Kûfa. The movement was crushed, and Muslim was executed.

It was only after he had taken to road for Kûfa that the news of the death of Muslim reached Husain. 'Ubaidallâh had established outposts on all the roads leading from the Hijâz to Iraq. One of these patrols soon encountered Husain's weakly defended party of a few friends and relatives, and ordered them to halt. Upon their refusal to comply, the patrol accompanied them as far as the plain of Kerbela, where the halt was made.

During the following ten days, Husain showed the same char-

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[1]H. Lammens, "al-Husain," EI, ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al., Vol. II (1927).

acter defects of irresolution and indecision which had plagued his father. The circle of steel formed by the soldiers sent by the governor closed in around him. The governor wished to persuade or force him to surrender, and, as a means toward this end, he cut off all access to the Euphrates, hoping to reduce Husain by thirst. He remained obdurate, however, and, being persuaded of the inviolability of his own person, he hoped for a turn of opinion in his favor among the soldiers from Kûfa.

When the tenth of Muharram dawned, 'Umar b. Sa'd, the commander of the governor's forces, had four thousand men assembled on the plain. An ultimatum of surrender was issued to Husain. It went unanswered. 'Umar then executed a turning movement to envelop the camp of Husain. His partisans offered resistance, and the battle was on. It is highly unlikely that Husain performed the many heroic deeds ascribed to him by the Shiites. An engagement occured in which Husain fell. His tents were pillaged. What had started merely as a police action, had now degenerated into a general mêlée. "It did not last long; just time to slay a camel or to take a nap."[1] Thus it was described in a verbal report to Yazîd. The caliph deplored this development, since it had been his wish to secure the person of Husain to prevent the continuation of the Kûfa revolt. Yazîd treated the survivors with honor, provided for their needs, and sent them back to Medina with an escort.

But from the Shiite standpoint, the whole story has not been told. These events on the plain of Kerbela were far more than the unfortunate outcome of a police action which got out of control.

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[1]Cited by ibid.

Actually, it was an event of cosmic significance, fraught with religious and soteriological meaning. God, himself, brooded over this bloody affair, while the small band of martyrs fought desperately against the personification of the forces of evil.

The Shiite version of the affair is reflected strongly in the following account, although the writer is chiefly concerned with writing a defence of Islam from what has been termed the "modernist" point of view:

> Husain, the second son of Ali, had inherited his father's chivalric nature and virtues. . . . He united in his person the right of descent from Ali, with the holy character of a grandson of the Apostle. . . . Husain had never deigned to acknowledge the title of the tyrant of Damascus, whose vices he despised, and whose character he regarded with abhorrence; and when the Moslems of Kûfa besought his help to release them from the curse of the Ommeyyade's rule, he felt that it was his duty to respond. . . . The assurances that he received, that all Irâk was ready to spring to its feet to hurl the despot from his throne the moment he appeared on the scene, decided him to start for Kûfa with his family. . . . As he approached the confines of Irâk he was alarmed by the solitary and hostile face of the country, and suspecting treachery, the Ommeyyade's weapon, he encamped his small band at a place called Kerbela near the western bank of the Euphrates. No event in history surpasses in pathos the scenes enacted on this spot. Husain's apprehensions of betrayal proved to be only too true. He was overtaken by an Ommeyyade army under the brutal and ferocious Obaidullah ibn-Ziyâd. For days their tents were surrounded; and as the cowardly hounds dared not come within the reach of the sword of Ali's son they cut the victims off from the waters of the Tigris [Euphrates?]. The sufferings of the poor band of martyrs were terrible. In a conference with the chief of the enemy, Husain proposed the option of three honorable conditions: that he should be allowed to return to Medina, or be stationed in a frontier garrison against the Turks, or [be] safely conducted to the presence of Yezîd. But the commands of the Ommeyyade tyrant were stern and inexorable--that no mercy should be shown to Husain or his party, and that they must be brought as criminals before the "Caliph" to be dealt with according to the Ommeyyade sense of justice. As a last resort, Husain besought these monsters not to war upon the helpless women and children, but to kill him and be done with it. But they knew no pity. He pressed his friends to consult their safety with a timely flight; they unanimously refused to desert or survive their beloved master. One of the enemy's

> chiefs, struck with horror at the sacrilege of warring against the grandson of the Prophet, deserted with thirty followers "to claim the partnership of inevitable death." In every single combat and close fight the valour of the Fâtimides was invincible. But the enemy's archers picked them off at a safe distance. One by one the defenders fell, until at last there remained but the grandson of the Prophet. Wounded and dying he dragged himself to the river-side for a last drink; they turned him off with arrows from there. And as he re-entered his tent he took his infant child in his arms; him they transfixed with a dart. The striken father bowed his head to heaven. Able no more to stand up against his pitiless foes, alone and weary, he seated himself at the door of his tent. One of the women handed him a cup of water to assuage his thirst; as he raised it to his lips he was pierced in the mouth with a dart; and his son and nephew were killed in his arms. He lifted his hands to heaven,--they were filled with blood,--and he uttered a funeral prayer for the living and the dead. Raising himself for one desperate charge, he threw himself among the Ommeyyades, who fell back on every side. But faint with the loss of blood, he soon fell to the ground, and then the murderous crew rushed upon the dying hero. They cut off his head, trampled on his body, and subjected it to every ignominy in the spirit of old Hind. They carried the martyr's head to the castle of Kûfa, and the inhuman Obaidullah struck it on the mouth with a cane. "Alas!" cried an aged Musulman, "on these lips I have seen the lips of the Apostle of God."[1]

This version of the story draws upon the Shiite historians, and is comparatively restrained. As will be seen presently, the events as told during Muharram in poetry and drama carry these sentiments much further and give the story a numinous dimension.

The Political-Religious Nature of Shiism

In reference to the event just related, an historian of Islam has written recently: "This martyr's death of Husayn, of no political effect whatsoever, nevertheless furthered the religious development of the Shi'ah, the party of the 'Alids."[2] It seems that the evident attempt to differentiate sharply the spheres of

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[1]Ameer Ali, The Spirit of Islâm (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927?), pp. 300-302.

[2]Brockelmann, op. cit., p. 76.

the religious and the political stems from the writer's inclination to borrow concepts which have developed in the history of Western Christianity; namely, the concept of the separation of church and state. Such a tendency must be guarded against, for the traditional situation in Islam is one which finds these two spheres of social life in closest relation, with the ideal of achieving complete unity. The reason for this lies, to a large extent, in the nature of the early Muslim community at Medina, where Islam was established as a political state.

This is an important fact to keep in mind when dealing with sectarianism in Islam; in our case with Shiism. Politics and religion have to be considered always in dynamic relation to each other. As an example, in a Sunnite state the ritual cursing of the first three caliphs cannot be tolerated because it amounts to treason.

Nevertheless, it is possible to point to a predominance of either political or religious motivation in any one historical movement at any given time. The question, therefore, that concerns us here is that of gaining some insight into the shift of emphasis within Shiism from the early political emphasis to the later rise of the Shiite religious doctrines.

Von Grunebaum has remarked that probably the rise of the doctrine of the Imamate will never be fully and satisfactorily explained.[1] This doctrine, which opened the way for a doctrine of incarnation among the "exaggerating" Shiites, might have come from several sources, for incarnation was a strong Middle Eastern reli-

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[1]Von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), pp. 186-187.

gious motif during the formative years of Shiism. The problem of how Shiism took it up and when this happened is difficult to solve. The earliest date ventured has placed the entrance of this concept into Shiism contemporaneous with 'Alî. A certain Jewish member of 'Alî's party, one 'Abdallah b. Saba', supposedly taught that the son-in-law of the Prophet was of superhuman character,[1] but recent research has thrown doubt upon the existence of 'Abdallah.[2] The earliest rebellious movement within Islam, which utilized heretical religious doctrines, was that led by Mukhtar in Iraq during the reign of 'Abdalmalik (685-705). As for Husain, specifically, there is evidence available to show that he was considered by a follower to be a mediator between man and God, as expressed in a prayer uttered at Kerbela just four years after Husain's death.[3]

Shiism was a movement which appealed to every kind of malcontent and rebel in the empire, in addition to those persons whose religious needs were met by this sectarian community. Perhaps this is why Shiism made such rapid headway in Persia. The Islamic conquest of that nation assumed the character of a struggle between the Arabs and the Iranians, and the sharp antagonism persisted through the period of the caliphs of Damascus. Persian opposition to the caliphs, which was primarily political, would most naturally express itself in sectarian religious form. Such natural convergence of Persian nationalism and Shiism was further enhanced by the

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[1]Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs (2d ed. rev.; London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1940), pp. 248-249.

[2]Bernard Lewis, The Origins of Isma'ilism (Cambridge: Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1940), p. 24.

[3]See below, pp. 26-27.

marriage alliance between Husain and Shahr-Banu, a daughter of Yezdigerd III--the last Sassanian king of Persia. In all probability, this marriage helped to exalt the imâms in the eyes of their Persian adherents, since the kings of Persia were considered by their subjects as divine.

The Historical Development of Muharram

At the beginning of the historical process are these events of the seventh century. In the contemporary Shiite world, Muharram is celebrated in a complex way. How did these practices develop?

The answer to this question can, again, be only tentative. The historical record is neither complete nor continuous; there being many long periods in which the Muharram is not mentioned. However, there is enough information on record to enable us to highlight some important developments.

The shrine at Kerbela.--A feature common to all the factions in Islam is the practice of making pilgrimages to the tombs of martyrs and saints. It has an important role in Shiite Islam, whose chief shrines are the tombs of 'Alî and Husain at Najaf and Kerbela, the tomb of Imam Reza at Meshed and of Fâtima, his sister, at Qum; in addition, of course, to Muhammad's tomb at Medina.

The record shows that at a very early date the tomb of Husain became a religious objective for pious Shiites. One report gives an account of Sulaiman b. Surad and a number of his followers, who, in 684, spent a day and a night at Kerbela. We are told that the purpose of this pilgrimage was to atone for not having participated and given their lives in the battle which took Husain's life. In the course of their worship, one 'Abdallah b. Wâlî al-

Taimî addressed Husain, along with his father, 'Alî, and his brother, Hasan, as "the bond (of reconciliation), wasîla, with God on the Day of Judgment."[1]

It seems reasonable to assume that Kerbela's importance as a goal for Shiite pilgrims grew rapidly, and that it functioned as a focus for Husain veneration. Its fortunes rose and fell with the status of the 'Alid cause at Baghdad. Umm Mûsâ, the mother of the third Abbasid caliph, al-Mahdi (775-785), is reported to have substantially endowed the shrine and its staff, while al-Mutawakkil (847-861) demolished the shrine and stopped all Shiite pilgrimages as part of his effort to reduce the power of the Mu'tazilites and Shiites.[2] A century later the shrine had been completely rebuilt, for it is described, at that time, as being large and having a domed chamber.[3]

Special Muharram observances.--It is probable that the anniversary of the martyrdom of Husain was observed in a special way by the Shiites from the very beginning. By coincidence, the day of death occured on âshûrâ, a day which had already been designated by Muhammad as a day of voluntary fasting and special sanctity. This helped to reinforce Shiite piety, which termed it roz-i-qatl, day of the murder.

Our first report of the full ten-day observance of Muharram is drawn from the period of Bûyid control of the Abbasid caliphate.

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[1]R. Strothmann, "Ta'ziya," EI, ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al., Vol. IV (1934).

[2]E. Honigmann, "Meshhed Husain," EI, ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al., Vol. III (1936).

[3]Ibn-Hawkal, ed. De Goeje, cited by ibid.

Specifically, it was Mu'izz al-Dawla who, in 963, took steps to officially institute the commemoration in Baghdad:

> [He] issued an order for the tenth of Muharram which proclaimed "that in mourning for the tragic event the shops in the bazaars were to be closed and all buying and selling was to be suspended. Proprieters of cookshops were forbidden to cook, the butchers to slaughter and water carriers to draw water. Further, the population were to array themselves in robes of mourning and the women were to appear with their hair in disorder and blackened faces and, in grief for the martyrdom of Husain, were to rend their garments and parade the streets beating their breasts."[1]
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> Since this procedure was not customary in Baghdad, the Sunnite doctors regarded it as a great innovation; but since they had no control over Mu'izz al-Dawla they could do nothing but submit. Thereafter every year until the collapse of the Daylamite [or Bûyid] dynasty this custom of mourning was observed by Shiites in all countries on the first ten days of Muharram. In Baghdad it continued until the early days of Tugril the Saljûq.[2]

Possible connection with the Tammuz festival.--As we have just seen, the tenth century Bûyids put the Muharram on an official basis in Baghdad. How long the Shiites had been commemorating the Muharram by rites of public mourning previous to this time, we do not know.

It is significant, in this connection, that rites of mourning very similar to the Shiite practice were associated with the religious life of Mesopotamia and contiguous areas in early times. These rites were practiced annually during the Tammuz commemoration. Several orientalists--the most recent being Von Grunebaum--have been attracted to the theory that the Muharram commemoration is a survival of these earlier mourning rites, which became a part of the

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[1]Ibn al-Athîr, viii, 407; cited by Reuben Levy, A Baghdad Chronicle (Cambridge: The University Press, 1929), pp. 159-160.

[2]Browne, op. cit., p. 31.

Mesopotamian cultural milieu.[1]

The Tammuz festival was celebrated in commemoration for the dying god. All nature reflected this tragic event, since the festival occurred at the end of spring and the onset of the cruelly hot summer. In the myth his death is mourned by his consort, Ishtar, and in practice the mourning assumed the proportions of a public lament. During the seven days of mourning the body of the god was washed, annointed, shrouded, and then carried out in a procession to be interred.

It is important to notice that these rites did not assume the character of an expression of penitence for sin, but were a demonstration of grief and sorrow for the dead Tammuz, perhaps even for all the dead, in the nature of an All Souls' Day, as suggested by Jastrow.[2] The Muharram mourning is of this nature, too, in that it lacks the penitential element.

The wide appeal of the Tammuz-mourning can account, perhaps, for subsequent outbreaks of similar practices in the Middle East. Robertson Smith says that the Tammuz commemoration "became one of the most deeply rooted parts of popular religion."[3] Frankfort, by pointing out the intimate connection between the waning and rising forces of nature and man's own desire for survival, indicates a pos-

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[1]An article which supports, in detail, this theory is that by B. D. Eerdmans, "Der Ursprung der Ceremonien des Hosein-Festes," Zeitschrift fuer Assyriologie, Vol. IX (1894), pp. 280-324.

[2]Morris Jastrow, The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria ("Handbooks on the History of Religions, Vol. II"; Boston: Ginn & Company, 1898), p. 682.

[3]W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (3d ed,; London: A. & C. Black Ltd., 1927), p. 412.

sible reason for the immense popularity of these rites, in addition to the regular practice of the official cult:

> If these natural phenomena possess a strong emotional appeal, if in particular the annual rebirth of nature affects men deeply in many lands, it is not merely because his own life depends on it but also because it is an image of his fate and hope--whether that hope concerns personal resurrection, as in Egypt, or a survival in one's descendents, as in Mesopotamia. It is no doubt due to this peculiarly personal appeal which the three gods [Tammuz, Adonis, and Osiris] possessed that we find their worship represented, not only by temple rituals, but also by widespread popular observances of which vague echoes can be found in our sources. But when it is said that the cult of these gods belongs to popular rather than to official religion, the statement requires qualification. It holds good for Adonis, who had not, as far as we know, a temple of his own and was worshiped in the shrine of the great goddess at Byblos. It is probable that Tammuz was similarly worshiped in the shrine of Inanna-Ishtar in Erech, and the wailings for Tammuz which Ezekiel observed in Jerusalem (Ezek. 8:14) belong also to the sphere of popular religion. But such public laments did not constitute the whole of the cult of the suffering god in Mesopotamia, and Tammuz is only one of his many names. In one guise or another he was quite often the object of an official cult. As Tishpak, for instance, he was the city-god of Eshnunna. Even Assur and Marduk seem to have been specialized forms of "Tammuz." In Egypt the popular cult of Osiris came into being in historical times and was demonstrably a derivate of the official cult of a god who represented in an unchanging mythological guise the predecessor of the ruling monarch.[1]

The persistence of these cultic practices has been demonstrated by outbreaks of rites which resemble closely the popular features of the Tammuz-mourning many centuries later:

> Late in the Middle Ages, in A.D. 1064 and again in 1204, the Arabic historian Ibn al-Athîr records sporadic revivals, on a great scale, of the ancient lament for the dead god. In the former case a mysterious threat was circulated from Armenia to Chuzistan, that every town which did not lament the dead "king of the Jinn" should utterly perish; in the latter a fatal disease raged in the parts of Mosul and Irac, "and it was divulged that a woman of the Jinn called Omm 'Oncôd (Mother of the Grape-cluster) had lost her son, and that everyone who would not make lamentation for him would fall a victim to the epidemic." In

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[1]Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 288-289.

this case the form of the lamentation is recorded: "O Omm 'Oncôd, excuse us, 'Oncôd is dead, we knew it not."[1]

What appears to be a modern survival of the ancient Tammuz rites was observed by Frankfort at Khorsabad in 1930. It was a "rain-making" dance performed by a man and a "woman," which included such acts as feigned death by the man, demonstrations of grief by the "woman," and a vigorous resurrection on the part of the man. The entire dance was accompanied by songs, which called for rain and a good harvest of grain.[2]

Of course, the foregoing remarks do not prove historically that the Tammuz festival and Muharram are directly connected. But the theory does suggest possibilities for explaining the presence in Shiism of practices that are unique in Islam.

Special Muharram literature.--With the establishment of Shiism as the official religion of Persia (1502), we enter into a period of important Shiite literary activity. Under the Safavids, any court poet, who wished to express religious sentiments in his compositions, would naturally have to couch them in Shiite terms.

It was in this period that the Shiite marthiya literature, which forms the basis for the modern rawza-khwani, an important aspect of Muharram, became established. The marthiya, which is a poem composed in memory of a deceased person, is pre-Islamic. It was "the custom of the ancient Arabs after the usual nawh or lamentation of women that a member of the family, gifted as a poet, should

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[1]Ibn al-Athîr, x, 28, ed. Tornberg; cited by Robertson Smith, op. cit., p. 412.

[2]Frankfort, "A Tammuz Ritual in Kurdistan (?)," Iraq, Vol. I, (November, 1934), pp. 137-145.

commemorate the noble qualities of the departed in a poem by enumerating them."[1] In the Safavid period the marthiya was taken over by Shiite poets and skillfully developed into elegiac poetry honoring the Imams. Muhtasham of Kâshân (d. 1588) is considered to have been the best of these Persian elegy writers.[2]

In addition to the appearance of the elegies, which are of real literary merit, the period witnessed the rise of a simpler folk poetry, which dealt with the same religious themes. Generally speaking, court support and the popular response were mutually helpful in establishing Shiism in Persia as a unifying national force.

It is interesting to note that the art of marthiya writing was developed to a high degree by the "Lucknow school" of Indian Shiites. The two poets, Anîs and Dabîr, wrote elegies on the martyrdom of Husain which were widely popular. These men were not only good poets:

> . . . but were equally remarkable for the wonderful effect they could produce by giving public readings of their works. They made reading an art, which has since been imitated, but has not so far been exceeded in India. Large gatherings of people of all classes, Muslims and Hindus, used to assemble to hear their recitations. . . . A noteworthy example of the influence of this form of literature was an adoption of the style of the marsiya by distinguished Hindu writers for depicting the charming story of the Ramayana, concerning the sacrifices made by the heroic Rama in the performance of his pious filial duty and unselfish love of Lakshman, his brother, and Sita, his wife.[3]

The rise of the ta'ziya.--The problem of the origins of the

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[1]F. Krenkow, "Marthiya," EI, ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al., Vol. III (1936).

[2]Browne, op. cit., p. 28.

[3]Abdul Qadir, "The Cultural Influences of Islam," in The Legacy of India, ed. G. T. Garratt (Oxford: The University Press, 1937), pp. 293-294.

ta'ziya is one which intrigues Western scholarship. Its dramatic appearance, in a fully developed form, in the travel account of Morier early in the nineteenth century, leaves this question of origins unanswered.

The theory that the ta'ziya is an outgrowth of European influence in Persia is unsatisfactory in many ways. In the first place, it is highly unlikely that the few contacts which existed between Persia and Europe were of the kind that would have permitted the transfer of this art form. Commercial, military, and political activities are not much concerned about drama. Another objection to this theory arises in the fact that the ta'ziya seems to belong much more to the popular piety than to the upper levels of Persian society, where any European influences would have become manifest. In fact, Litten has expressed the belief that the adoption of European standards by the upper classes in Persia has resulted, in part, in embarrassment on their part over the crudities and excesses of the popular Muharram observance.[1]

Probably a more accurate guess as to the origins of the ta'ziya would be to ascribe it to the outgrowth of the developmental process within the Muharram, itself. All the elements for a dramatic performance are present in the commemoration. The "stage properties" are there in abudance, and the "scripts" are the very emotional elegies, which are read before seated audiences. These, combined with a cultural tradition of religious pantomime,[2] would

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[1]Wilhelm Litten, Das Drama in Persien (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1929), pp. xviii-xix.

[2]S. Langdon, Tammuz and Ishtar (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1914), p. 11.

probably have developed, in the course of repeated Muharram celebrations, into the ta'ziya.

CHAPTER III

THE CULTIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MUHARRAM

The most convenient procedure for this study of Muharram is to divide it into two main sections. The first of these will cover the cultic and sociological aspects of the commemoration, while in the second section we will concern ourselves with an analysis of the religious beliefs which are involved. The latter section will be taken up in the next chapter.

The method used in this chapter is one of treating individually the various elements which comprise the cultic and sociological aspects of Muharram. Fortunately, these elements are very clearly defined; they are the special preparations, elegiac readings, dramatic presentations, processions, and self-mutilative practices.

Introductory Remarks

The geographical distribution of the Muharram commemoration parallels that of the Shiite population of the Islamic world. In general, this area extends from Asia Minor through Iraq and Persia, across Turkestan and Afghanistan, down into Pakistan, and as far south in India as Hyderabad. The small pockets of Shiites in various other parts of the world need not concern us here. For all practical purposes, the areas of major interest for this study are Persia, where the Shiites enjoy official status, and Pakistan and

India, where they form important minorities.

Actually, the commemoration cannot very well be tolerated by the governmental and religious authorities of orthodox Sunnite nations. It will be remembered from the discussion in the previous chapter that because of the close relationship of politics and religion in Islam these two realms of life have a direct bearing on each other. Theoretically, the Shiite population of an orthodox nation challenges the right of the Sunnite government to be in power. Because of this, any public celebration of Muharram, in the course of which the anti-Sunnite prejudice of Shiism reaches a fever pitch, is potentially very dangerous. In the years around the turn of the century, the celebration of Muharram in Ottomon Turkey was permitted within the confines of private homes,[1] while the police in British India accompanied every public phase of the commemoration on the lookout for disturbances. Similar police surveillance was practiced in the Caucasus region of Czarist Russia.[2]

The month of Muharram is the first month of the Muslim calendar. The suggestion has been made that its name was derived from the pre-Islamic Arabian proscription, haram, which prohibited tribal wars during the month. The month is considered to be auspicious by both Sunnites and Shiites. There are a number of traditions which state that Muhammad considered fasting on the Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays of Muharram to be of special merit, while forgiveness of sins for two years will be granted the Muslim who keeps

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[1]Pierre Ponafidine, Life in the Moslem East, trans. Emma C. Ponafidine (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1911), p. 346.

[2]Ibid., p. 346.

a vigil during the first night and fasts during the first day of Muharram.[1]

The Muharram commemoration covers the first ten days of the month, although some communities observe an additional three days, and others continue elegy-readings into the following month of Safar. The commemoration commences on the evening of the new moon.[2] This period of ten days is the traditional anniversary, of course, of the negotiations between Husain's party and the forces of the caliph at Kerbela. By coincidence, the climax of those negotiations--the massacre of the party--occurred on âshûrâ, the tenth of Muharram.

This day is one of great traditional importance in popular Islamic piety. Muhammad had designated it as a day of voluntary fasting, which is binding on the Sunnites, of course, and it is conceivable that originally Muhammad was influenced by his Jewish contemporaries in this connection. Popular belief gives the day additional importance, in that:

> . . . on the tenth day of Muharram the following events occurred: the first fall of rain, the appearance of Adam and Eve upon the earth and the propagation of the human race, the creation of . . . Paradise (bihisht), . . . of Hell (dûzakh), of the 'guarded tablets' (al-haula-l-mahfûz), on which the decrees of God are written, of the pen (qalam) with which these decrees are inscribed, of fate or destiny (taqdîr), of life (hayât), and of death (maut): these things did the Almighty

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[1]Thomas P. Hughes, A Dictionary of Islam (2d ed.; London: W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd., 1896), p. 355.

[2]The Muslims reckon the day as beginning in the evening at six, and extending to the following evening. Under this scheme, the hours of darkness precede the daylight hours.

create in his infinite wisdom.[1]

But, for the Shiites, all this is transcended in the one supreme event--the martyrdom of Husain--which lends significance to ashûrâ. They designate it as roz-i-qatl, day of the murder.

Many observers have remarked upon the sombre and serious atmosphere that pervades the Muharram. Except in South India, where the holiday mood predominates, it is not the usual type of religious festival. The twelve centuries which separate the historical Husain and his modern adherents have not lessened the sense of mourning, which gave the impetus to the earliest commemorations. Public demonstrations of grief are in evidence everywhere, including dark clothing, wailing, and the shedding of tears.

An interesting sidelight on the "Muharram tears" has been given by several writers. Quite often these tears are soaked up in a piece of cotton, and put in a storage bottle. These tears are believed by some to be of special medicinal value, and are used in times of crisis.[2]

During the ten days of Muharram, the normal routine of living is suspended in order that there might be full participation in the many activities connected with the festival. Restrictions and tabus vary with the local customs, but, in general, they cover such items as dress, diet, and the interruption of marital relations.[3]

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[1]Ja'far Sharîf, Islam in India or Qânûn-i-Islâm, trans. G. A. Herklots (new ed., revised with notes by William Crooke; London: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 151-152.

[2]Cf. Samuel G. Wilson, Persian Life and Customs (Chicago: Student Missionary Campaign Library, 1895), p. 195.

[3]Crooke, Herklots' Islam in India, p. 167.

Special Preparations

The theaters.--The public phases of Muharram entail the use of special facilities, such as the theaters which are used for the ta'ziya and the reading of the Muharram elegies, although the latter is sometimes staged in a mosque. These special facilities range in size from the temporary roadside stands to the royal theater of the shah in Tehran. Morier has given his readers a description of what he observed in Isfahan, nearly one hundred and fifty years ago:

> The preparations which were made throughout the city consisted in the erecting of large tents, that are there called Takieh, in the streets and open places, in fitting them up with black linen, and furnishing them with objects emblematic of mourning. These tents were erected either at the joint expense of the mahal, or district, or by men of consequence, as an act of devotion; and all ranks of people have free access to them. The expense of the takieh consists in the hire of a mollah, or priest, of actors and their clothes, and in the purchase of lights.[1]

Lane-Poole has given us a few more details:

> The theater (tekya) is a plain enclosure, built or boarded off in the court of a mosque or palace, or any other open space, or permanently attached to a rich man's house. It is sheltered from the sun and the rain by an enormous awning, stretched on masts, hung with tiger and panther skins, shields, and swords, and countless lamps. In the center is a brick platform, surrounded with a scaffolding of black poles, from which hang colored lamps to light up the evening performances. At the back is the tâbût, or models of the martyr's tombs.[2]

The tekya varies greatly in seating capacity. It ranges from the small to the very large. The more modest of them seat ". . . not more than three or four hundred spectators, and there are tekyas for three or four thousand. At Ispahan there are repre-

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[1]Morier, A Second Journey through Persia, p. 177.

[2]Lane-Poole, op. cit., p. 224.

sentations which bring together more than twenty thousand people."[1] Such performances must have taken place on a very large scale!

Arnold goes on to describe the royal tekya in Tehran, as Count Gobineau observed it in the forties of the last century:

> The tekya is a walled parallelogram, with a brick platform, sakou, in the centre of it. . . . The sakou makes the stage; in connection with it, at one of the opposite extremities of the parallelogram lengthwise, is a reserved box, tâgnumâ, higher than the sakou. This box is splendidly decorated, and is used for peculiarly interesting and magnificent tableaux,--the court of the Caliph, for example,--which occur in the course of the piece. A passage of a few feet wide is left free between the stage and this box; all the rest of the space is for the spectators, of whom the foremost rows are sitting on their heels close to this passage, so that they help the actors to mount and descend the high steps of the tâgnumâ. . . . On each side of the tâgnumâ are boxes, and along one wall of the enclosure are other boxes with fronts of elaborate woodwork, which are left to stand as a permanent part of the construction; facing these, with the floor and the stage in between, rise tiers of seats as in an amphitheatre. All places are free; the great people have generally provided and furnished the boxes, and take care to fill them; but if a box is not occupied when the performance begins, any ragged beggar or street-urchin may walk in and seat himself there. A row of gigantic masts runs across the middle of the space, one or two of them being fixed in the sakou itself; and from these masts is stretched an immense awning which protects the whole audience. Up to a certain height these masts are hung with tiger and panther skins, to indicate the violent character of the scenes to be represented. Shields of steel and hippopotamus skin, flags, and naked swords, are also attached to these masts. A sea of colour and splendour meets the eye all around. Woodwork and brickwork disappear under cushions, rich carpets, silk hangings, India muslin embroidered with silver and gold, shawls from Kerman and from Cashmere. There are lamps, lustres of coloured crystal, mirrors, Bohemian and Venetian glass, porcelin vases of all degrees of magnitude from China and from Europe, paintings and engravings, displayed in profusion everywhere. The taste may not always be soberly correct, but the whole spectacle has just the effect of prodigality, colour, and sumptuousness which we are accustomed to associate with the splendours of the Arabian Nights.[2]

This royal theater in Tehran far exceeds anything built in

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[1]Arnold, op. cit., p. 259.

[2]Ibid., pp. 259-261.

India for use during Muharram. In North India the imambara, as the enclosure is called, may be of permanent construction and attached to a rich man's house. The chief purpose of the imambara is to furnish a suitable location for the cenotaphs, and to function as a central assembly point for the people to gather to hear the tragic story recited. In South India the enclosure seems to be even less imposing. Here it is referred to as the âshûrkhâna, ten-day house, and ta'ziyakhâna, house of the cenotaphs.

The cenotaphs.--One of the most important features of Muharram is the building and parading of the representations of the martyrs' tombs. In Persia these are called tâbût, while in India tâbût and ta'ziya are interchangeable designations for them. The cenotaphs are the focus of religious emotion. Because of this, great care and skill is lavished upon their construction. There seems to be no standardized form or size for the tâbût, for it appears in a great variety of shapes. The one practical limit upon its size is the necessity to make the tâbût portable.

A description of an Indian tâbût is found in the Preface to Pelly's first volume:

> Against the side of the Imambarrah directed toward Mecca is set the tabut--also called tazia--or model of the tombs at Kerbela. In the houses of the wealthier Shiahs these tabuts are fixtures, and are beautifully fashioned of silver and gold, or of ivory and ebony, embellished with inlaid work. The poorer Shiahs provide themselves with a tabut for the occasion of lath and plaster, tricked out in mica and tinsel. . . . The tabut is lighted up like an altar, with innumerable green candles, and nothing can be more brilliant than the appearance of an Imambarrah of white stone, or polished white stucco, tricked out in green, lighted up with glass chandeliers, sconces, and oil lamps, arranged along the leading architectural lines of the building, with its tabut on on one side, dazzling to blind-

ness.[1]

The Muharram fire.--The use of "sacred" fires during Muharram is a feature of the commemoration which has students puzzled as to its origins. Some writers say that these fires represent the trench of burning faggots which Husain set up to the rear of his tents to protect the party from attack in that direction, while others say that there is no connection. It has been suggested that these fires might be a survival of the historical fire "worship" of the Persians.

Oman has included a mention of the fire in his description of Muharram preparations near Lahore:

> Shortly before the new moon of the Muharram the Shiah enclose a space which they call the tabut khana, and in this the tabut, or portable structure representing the tomb of Husain or one of his martyred followers, is constructed. As soon as the new moon becomes visible, a spade is stuck into the ground before the enclosure, and here, later on, a pit is dug in which a fire is kept burning the ten days of the Muharram celebrations.[2]

In South India the fire is the object of a great deal of superstitious veneration, and its importance sometimes seems to transcend that of the tâbût. The fire is supposed to have the power to perform love magic, to produce children for barren women, and to be an important factor in the casting out of evil spirits. In this connection, the Qânûn-i-Islâm says:

> They . . . go to the spot selected for the fire-pit (alâwâ). . . . It is 1-1/2 to 8 cubits in diameter, with a low wall built around it, and every year it is dug in the same place.

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[1]Lewis Pelly, The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1879), I, xviii-xix.

[2]John C. Oman, The Brahmans, Theists and Muslims of India (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co., 1907?), p. 296.

> After the pit is dug, they light fires in it every evening during the festival, and ignorant people, young and old, fence across it with sticks and swords [perhaps in representation of the battle which raged across the fire trench at Kerbela]. In performance of vows some leap into the burning embers and out again, while others leap through the flames or throw handfuls of fire about. Women, too, make a fire pit, sing the funeral elegies (marsiya) and beat their breasts. . . . Some women in place of the fire-pit put a lamp on a wooden mortar or on an inverted earthen pot and make their lamentations over it.[1]

Elegiac Readings

Mention has already been made in Chapter II of the marthiya (also called mujlis in India) and its use during Muharram. From the aesthetic point of view, it is probably the most satisfying part of the commemoration. The marthiya has been composed by the best poets of both Persia and India, and has taken its place in the national literatures of both nations.[2]

During his visit to Isfahan, Morier attended a rawza-khwan, or elegy-reading:

> On entering the room (takieh) we found a large assembly of Persians clad in dark-coloured clothes, which accompanied with their black caps, the black beards, and their dismal faces, really looked as if they were afflicting their souls. . . . After we had sat for some time, the windows of the room were thrown open, and then we discovered a priest on a high chair, under the covering of the tent, surrounded by a crowd of the populace; the whole of the scene being lighted by candles. He commenced with an exordium, in which he reminded them of the great value of each tear shed for the sake of Imaum Hossein, which would be an atonement for a past life of wickedness. . . . He then began to read from a book with a sort of nasal chaunt, that part of the tragic history of Hossein appointed for the day, which soon produced its effect upon his audience, for he scarcely had turned over three leaves, before the Grand Vizier commenced to shake his head to and fro, to utter in a most piteous voice the usual Persian exclamation of grief, "wahi! wahi!

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[1]Crooke, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

[2]For translations of two Persian elegies of unusual merit see Appendix I.

> wahi!" both of which acts were followed in a more or less violent manner by the rest of the audience. The chaunting of the priest lasted nearly an hour, and some parts of his story were indeed pathetic and well calculated to rouse the feelings of a superstitious and lively people.[1]

The reading of these tragic tales, whose contents consist of "stories of martyrs, the manner of their death, their last utterances, and the wailing and moaning of their friends and relatives,"[2] is carried on from day to day throughout the commemoration. When going through the streets during these days:

> . . . it is a common sight to catch glimpses through open windows and doors of the interior of a mosque or school, or perhaps a room engaged for the purpose. The Mullah is seated on the floor in front of his little book rest, reading, or rather chanting, and swaying his body back and forth as he does so. The floor is covered with seated people, veiled women being in the majority, and all are shaken with sobs and loud weeping.[3]

Evidently it takes great skill to read the elegies as it should be done. Bassett reports that the demand for properly trained readers is so great that a special class of mullas has arisen who devote themselves to this occupation.[4]

Contributions to the construction of the various structures used during Muharram are meritorious works. In India a well-to-do Shiite will often put up a small stand for marthiya recitations. Oman encountered one of these near Lahore:

> At a little distance in the roadway, some pious persons had erected a stall where marsiyas or elegies were being read in

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[1]Morier, A Second Journey through Persia, p. 178.

[2]Isaac Adams, Persia by a Persian (London: Eliot Stock, 1908), p. 418.

[3]Ponafidine, op. cit., p. 349.

[4]James Bassett, The Land of the Imams (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), p. 309.

> Urdu by a young man as I passed along. It was a small temporary structure made up of low wooden tables about a foot high, over which daries (cotton carpets) had been spread. The stall had no roof or covering, the sides were made of paper, and the chief feature of the facade was three moresque arches.
>
> The stall was lighted with three kerosine lamps, and ornamented with two or three vases and a pot of artificial flowers of the rudest possible manufacture. A few women stood and listened respectfully as the young minister intoned the marsiyas.[1]

Dramatic Presentations

The ta'ziya, as indicated by its name, is intended to be "an expression of sympathy" for the martyrs of Kerbela. Its purpose is to stir compassion in the hearts of the spectators for those tragic events, which purpose it successfully fulfills. The onlookers evidence their sympathetic response in profuse wailing and weeping.

Certain aspects of the ta'ziya have already been treated in other sections of this study, so it remains now for us to complete the picture.

Before taking up the matters of acting and scenes, mention should be made of the sparse stage properties which are used. Lane-Poole lists these as "Hoseyn's banner, sword and spear, and the like, and the tank which is to represent the river Euphrates."[2] Arnold's comment on this bears out Lane-Poole, but goes on to explain that more elaborate properties are not needed:

> In marked contrast with this display [the tekya] is the poverty of scenic contrivance and stage illusion. The subject is far too interesting and too solemn to need them. The actors are visible on all sides, and the exits, entrances, and stage-play of our theaters are impossible; the imagination of the

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[1] Oman, op. cit., pp. 301-302.

[2] Lane-Poole, op. cit., p. 224.

> spectator fills up the gaps and meets all requirements. . . . A copper basin of water represents the Euphrates; a heap of straw in the corner is the sand of the desert of Kerbela, and the actor goes up and takes a handful of it, when his part requires him to throw, in Oriental fashion, dust upon his head. There is no attempt at proper costume; all that is sought is to do honour to the personages of chief interest by dresses and jewels which would pass for rich and handsome things to wear in modern Persian life.[1]

In the Persian cities the ta'ziya is a highly organized production. The actors are formed into companies, under a manager who supervises all phases of the production. The players for the leading roles are carefully selected, and are well paid for their efforts.[2] Children, who qualify to fill the childrens' parts, are often given three to five hundred dollars for ten days of acting.[3] Parts which call for women are acted by men in womens' clothing. Usually the same company is called upon to give several performances a day, "and upon the close of one taazie the actors may be seen hurrying to another tekke."[4]

The acting is done in an atmosphere of deadly seriousness, in which the attention of the audience is caught up in the spell of the tragedy. No one objects to the fact that the players read their lines from slips of paper, while the ustad, or stage manager, remains constantly:

> . . . on the stage, gives the actors their cue, puts the children and any inexperienced actor in their right place,

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[1]Arnold, op. cit., pp. 261-262.

[2]Lane-Poole, op. cit., p. 226; "The men of Isfahan are preferred for the leading parts on account of their graceful dialect and their exceptional elocutionary powers."

[3]Ponafidine, op. cit., p. 348.

[4]Ibid., p. 348.

> dresses the martyr in his winding sheet, . . . and inserts a supply of chopped straw into the hands of those who are about to want it.[1]

An interesting sidelight on the seriousness of the performances is revealed in the difficulty of obtaining actors to play the roles of the villains. Many acts of violence against these actors have been reported. During the ta'ziya which Morier witnessed, ". . . a party of Russian prisoners was pressed into the army of Yezid, and . . . they made as speedy an exit after the catastrophe, as was in their power."[2]

The contents of the play, itself, are variable, since the scenes do not exist in canonical form. The ta'ziya retains something of a spontaneous character, with variations appearing in the "script" from year to year. Its status with the Shiite theologians is not entirely clear. The play seems to be a violation of the Koranic injunction against worship by any visual representation. Yet, many mullas are connected with their production. The result is that the "script" reflects to a much greater degree the sometimes extravagant beliefs of the laity than it does the cautious and disciplined formulations of the trained masters of Shiite theology.

The ten days' performance consists of a series of episodes, which are not tableaux in the strict sense of the word since they entail a great deal of movement. The episodes of the day are supposed to represent the events of that day at Kerbela, with the climactic death of Husain on the tenth, but often mixups and shortages of actors cause the production to get far off schedule.

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[1]Arnold, op. cit., p. 265.

[2]Morier, A Second Journey through Persia, p. 183.

The dramatic performance of these episodes seems to be less well developed in North India, and not found at all in the Deccan. Birdwood's description of the Shiite observance in Bombay indicates that the acting is done in pantomime, while the action is explained in a kind of running commentary by a chorus which chants the story.[1] The Qânûn-i-Islâm fails to mention anything resembling the Persian ta'ziya.

Crooke's edition of this work does take cognizance of what is a unique aspect of the âshûrâ observances in Hyderabad:

> On that night the streets are illuminated and every kind of revelry goes on. One form of this is an exhibition of a kind of magic lantern, in which the shadows of the figures representing battle scenes are thrown on a white cloth and attracts crowds. The whole town keeps awake that night and there is universal noise and confusion.[2]

Processions

Local customs vary so radically with regard to the processions during Muharram that it is impossible to get a unified picture of this aspect. The one common practice, however, is the âshûrâ procession to the local "Kerbela," where the cenotaphs and other properties are destroyed in a symbolic re-creation of the events of the terrible destruction during the first Kerbela.

Oman reports from North India, that:

> On the seventh day there is a procession to commemorate the marriage of Kasim and Fatima. On the eighth day a number of lances, each surmounted with an open hand, draped with green cloth--the standards in fact of Husain--are paraded about the streets. On the ninth day the tabuts are brought out and carried with much drumming and shouting to some appointed centre, pref-

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[1]Pelly, op. cit., I, xx.

[2]Crooke, op. cit., p. 163.

erably one which is associated with the name of a well-known local Muslim saint, while the concluding day witnesses the interment of these tabuts at the local Kerbela.[1]

The Qânûn-i-Islâm describes the marriage procession of Kasim and another on the seventh day in which spears are taken out with lemons fixed to their points. These represent the heads of the martyrs. In South India, the processions are marked by a great amount of merry-making, especially by the "Muharram faqirs," who are dressed to represent all kinds of fantastic creatures.

But the most vivid description of a Muharram procession is Birdwood's report on the final day's activities in Bombay. The goal of this âshûrâ procession is a quiet section of the harbor:

> On the 10th of Muharram every house in which a tabut is kept, or in which one has been put for the occasion, sends forth its separate cavalcade or company to join the general funeral procession. . . . First go the musicians, with pipes and cymbals, high horns, and deafening drums, followed by the arms and banners of Hasan and Husain, and the ensigns and crests, in gold and silver, or other metals, of Ali and Fatima, and these by a chorus of men chanting a funeral dirge, followed in turn by Husain's horse. Next come men bearing censers of burning myrrh and frankincense, and aloes wood and gum benjamin before the tabut . . . , which is raised aloft on poles, or borne on an elephant. . . . After gathering its contingent from every Shiah household as it winds its way through the tortuous streets of the native town, the living stream at length emerges on the Esplanade on the side opposite Back Bay--the whole Esplanade--"the plain of Kerbela" for the day--from Bombay Harbour to Back Bay lying almost flush with the sea. The confused uproar of its advance can be heard a mile away, and long before the procession takes definite shape through the clouds of dust and incense which move before it. It moves headlong onward in an endless line of flashing swords, blasoned suns (aftabis) and waving banners, State umbrellas, thrones, and canopies, and towering above all the tabuts, framed of the most elegant shapes of Saracenic architecture, glittering in silver and green and gold, and rocking backwards and forwards in high air, like great ships upon a rolling sea, with the rapid movement of the hurrying crowd, beating drums, chanting hymns, and shrieking, "Ya Ali, Ai Hasan, Ai Husain, Husain Shah! . . ." until the whole welkin seems to ring

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[1]Oman, op. cit., pp. 296-297.

> and pulsate with the terrific wail. Ever and anon a band of naked men, drunk with opium or hemp, and painted like tigers or leopards, makes a rush through the ranks of the procession, leaping furiously, and brandishing their swords and spears and clubs in the air. . . .
>
> So, for a mile in length, the rout advances, against the rays of the now declining sun, until the sea is reached, where it spreads out along the beach in a line at right angles to the "sacred way.". . . Nothing can be more picturesque than the arrival and break up of the procession in Back Bay. The temporary tabuts are taken out into the bay as far as they can be carried, and abandoned to the waves, into which all the temporary adornments of the permanent tabuts are also thrown. This operation has a wonderfully cooling effect on the mob. Their frantic clamours suddenly cease. In fact, the mourners of Hasan and Husain, having buried their tabuts in the sea, sieze the opportunity to have a good bath; and a little after the sun has finally dropped below the western horizon, the whole of the vast multitude is seen in the vivid moonlight to be slowly and peacefully regathering itself across the wide Esplanade into its homes again, and the Saturnalia into which the last act of the Mystery of Hasan and Husain has degenerated in India is closed for another year.[1]

In Persia the âshûrâ procession includes persons who represent the Imam Husain and his family, and the decapitation of Husain is carried out in full sight of everyone on the plain. According to Morier, this is done most realistically, and those acting the villains again have to look out for their own safety.

The extreme size of some of the portable constructions is pointed out in a report of a procession in Yezd:

> And so the procession moved in stately order to the square of Mir Chakmak, where there is an octagonal, tile-covered pillar, which is peculiar to Yezd. There a halt was made, while an enormous structure representing the bier of the Imam, decorated with fine Kerman shawls and innummerable glass, mirrors, swords, and daggers, was slowly carried around the Square by five hundred men, who bore this heavy burden as a sacred privilege. It is the pride of the inhabitants of Mohamedabad to render this unique service to the Imam.[2]

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[1]Pelly, op. cit., I, xxi-xxiii.

[2]Percy Sykes, The Glory of the Shia World (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 201.

Doubtless this tâbût was of great size, but it is difficult to believe it was as large as the enthusiastic Persian writer says it was.

Self-Mutilative Practices

There is one aspect of the Muharram commemoration in Persia which is almost universally opposed by the Shiite theologians; that of self-mutilative practices:

> Those desirous of acquiring special merit, or who have been hired by the rich to acquire it for them, and those under vows, whether rich or poor, are clothed in long white robes reaching to the ground. The robes are consecrated for the occasion and afterward are given to the poor. Robed in these, and with heads shaven, they are ready for the bloody sacrifice. Men with knives and swords cut the crowns of the human victims. The blood flows down in profusion over their white garments; wild excitement takes hold of them; swords are placed in their hands; they start in procession through the streets, flashing their swords in the air, gashing their heads, and raising the now wild and frenzied dry, "Shah Husain! Hasan! Husain!"[1]

Ponafidine has added some more details:

> The "bloody processions" march by themselves, as they go single file sideways, with a peculiar swaying, sidling step. . . . The left hand of each man is slipped into his neighbor's belt, and in the right hand is carried a sword with which, in time to music, each cuts his forehead and head, the blood pouring down over the white slips. Streets through which the "bloody processions" pass become wet and slippery with blood. Friends walk behind them to ward off the blows and to pick up and carry off to the baths those who fall from loss of blood.[2]

These processions are by far the most extreme and gruesome forms of this practice. Other milder forms occur in the regular processions and consist of back-beating and similar austerities.

The extent to which these practices are carried out depends upon the geographical location of the commemoration. The most fa-

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[1]Wilson, op. cit., p. 193.

[2]Ponafidine, op. cit., p. 344.

natical persons are said to come from Azerbaijan. Attempts have been made by the central government to repress these practices--the most recent being the suspension of the entire Muharram commemoration by Reza Shah Pahlevi during the thirties of this century--but these have been without lasting success.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MUHARRAM

There are two aspects of the doctrinal interpretation of Husain which have to be taken into consideration in any analysis of his role of Savior. The first of these is Husain's position as the third imâm, which involves a study of the doctrine of the Imamate, and the second is his position as the Prince of Martyrs and the sole intercessor for mankind. As an imâm Husain shares the stage with eleven other individuals, but as the greatest martyr of Islam he stands alone.

Some Important Shiite Concepts

The passion motif.--Much has been written by Western students of Islam about the incorporation into Shiism of the passion motif, which was present in the Middle Eastern religious milieu, but rejected by orthodox Islam. Strothmann puts it this way:

> The passion motive was thus restored to religion again among the Shî'a; it had been lost to official Islam since the turn of fortune which after the Hidjra set the Prophet's career on the path of worldly prosperity and excluded all possibility of it by a peaceful death, devoid of any tragedy that might have borne fruit in this direction. The insistence on the idea of a passion has so thoroughly penetrated the Shî'a that it has formed legends full of difficult historical problems, which have made even the lives of the 'Alîds, who never attained any prominence, end in martyrdom, usually through poison at the instigation of the Caliphs. . . . That this feeling of passion, . . . was transformed to something completely religious in the majority of the Shî'is; the death of Husain paved the way to paradise, is the result of the fact that another religious idea came into play, which is, as the history of religions show, often associated

with the passion motive, namely, the idea of the manifestation of the divine in man [epiphany].[1]

In writing about this fact, Lane-Poole has made some interesting comparisons in a widely quoted passage:

> . . . The story of a life of surrender for others' sake, the sad devotedness of Hoseyn, stirs a feeling that exists in every human heart--a certain admiration for self-denial which the most selfish men feel--a sort of worship for high ideals of conduct which has a corner in the most unromantic heart. It is the sorrowful resignedness, the willing yet tortured self-dedication of the martyr, that touches. One may see in it a Christian side to Islam. In the dry severity of the Arabian faith there is too little of the self-giving love which renounces all, even life itself, for the sake of others; there is more of the stiff-necked pharisaical pride which holds up its righteous head on its assured way to the pleasures of paradise. The death of Hoseyn, as idealized by after ages, fills up this want in Islam; it is the womanly as against the masculine, the Christian as opposed to the Jewish, element that this story supplies to the religion of Mohammad.[2]

Perhaps this fact can be most easily understood in terms of nostalgia religion, as given in Chapter I. The favorable estimate of history and the optimistic view of human nature of orthodox Islam rendered the fully-developed concept of the Savior unnecessary. The agent of God, Muhammad, termed himself a "Messenger" and a "Warner," whose duty it was to inform men of the will of God so that they could knowingly conform to it. The Koranic passage, "No soul shall labour but for itself; and no burdened one shall bear another's burden,"[3] seems clearly to teach individual responsibility and to reject both mediation and intercession. Muhammad thought himself to be as other men. His claim to prophethood lay

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[1]R. Strothmann, "Shî'a," EI, ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al., Vol. IV (1934).

[2]Lane-Poole, op. cit., p. 220.

[3]Sura 6:164; The Koran, trans. J. M. Rodwell ("Everyman's Library"; London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1948), p. 333.

in his use by Gabriel as the vehicle for the revelation of the Koran. Such a point of view tended, also, to accentuate the chasm between God and man by eliminating the need for a divine incarnation.[1]

On all these points, Shiism reversed the direction of development which orthodoxy was taking. Generally speaking, Shiism adopted the "other-worldly" dimension of the surrounding non-Islamic religions; rejecting what it considered to be the too facile accomodation of the Sunnites to the present life. Although the Shiites retained the optimistic estimate of human nature, they went on to say that man can only be saved through Divine grace and intercession. But the most outstanding departure from orthodoxy lay in the doctrine of the Imamate, which opened the way for the doctrine of incarnation to re-enter Islam among some of the "exaggerating" Shiite groups.

The "other-worldly" attitude.--The "other-worldly" point of view is explicity enunciated in creedal form and in the text of the ta'ziya. An illustration of it from the ta'ziya can be found in the episode in which Husain. lying wounded on the battle field, is approached by a darwish:

> The Darwish from Kabul.--O Lord God, wherefore is the outward appearance of a man of God usually without decoration or ornament? And why is the lap of the man of this world generally full of gold and jewels? On what account is the pillow of this great person the black dust of the road? and for what reason are the bed and the cushion of the rebellious made of velvet

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[1]Later orthodoxy made the intercession of Muhammad an article of faith. "And it must be believed that he (Muhammad) will make intercession (shafa'a) on the Day of Resurrection . . . and this intercession belongs to him only." Al-Fadali, with commentary by Al-Baijurî; cited by Duncan B. MacDonald, Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1903), p. 349.

and stuffed with down? Either Islam, the religion of peace and charity, has no true foundation in this world, or this young man, who is so wounded and suffers from thirst, is still an infidel.[1]

Husain asks the darwish the reason for his appearance, and he replies that he has come with a cup of water to relieve the thirst of a little girl, whose pitiful cry he heard in the night. Husain informs the dariwsh that the child is his daughter, to which the darwish replies:

> May I be offered for thee, dear sir, and for thy tearful eyes! Why should thy daughter be so sadly mourning and complaining? My heart is overwhelmed with grief for the abundance of tears running down thy cheeks. Why should the daughter of one like thee, a generous soul, suffer from thirst?
>
> Husain.--Know, O young man, that we are never in need of the water of this life. Thou art quite mistaken if thou hast supposed us to be of this world. If I will, I can make the moon or any other celestial orb fall down upon the earth; how much more can I get water for my children. Look at the hollow made in the ground with my spear; water would gush out of it if I were to like. I voluntarily die of thirst to obtain a crown of glory from God. I die parched, and offer myself a sacrifice for the sins of my people, that they should be saved from the wrath to come.[2]

The Shiite creeds place even greater stress on the fact that true Islam is not of this world, but that the soul must escape from the prison of the present existence. The following quotations are excerpts from the creed of Shaykh Sadûq, which was formulated before A.D. 921:

> When Imâm Husain b. 'Alî was hard pressed those who were with him looked at him, and behold! he was totally different from the rest of them. Because when in great difficulty, they trembled with fear, and their hearts were filled with trepidation, and their sides began to throb, Imâm Husain and some of his particular companions had bright faces, restful limbs, and complete peace of mind. Then some of them said to other: Look

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[1]Pelly, op. cit., II, 97.

[2]Ibid.

> at him, he does not care for death. Then Husayn said to them: Patience, O scions of nobility! For what is death, but a bridge by which you cross over from misfortune and harm to spacious gardens and eternal favors. Now which of you would dislike to proceed from a prison to a palace? . . . Verily, concerning this my father related to me from my grandfather, the Messenger of Allah: Forsooth, the world is a prison for the believer, and a paradise for the unbeliever; and death is a bridge for the former to their gardens, and for the latter to their hell fire.[1]

And, following:

> Imâm 'Alî (Zaynu'l-'Âbidîn) b. Husayn was asked: What is death? He said: For the believer it is like taking off clothes which are dirty and lousy; or breaking heavy shackles and fetters, and changing into the most gorgeous and perfumed of apparal, and (riding on) well-trained mounts, and (alighting in) familiar meeting places.[2]

Why did Shiism take this line of development? Perhaps, partly because of the political situation surrounding its rise, in which the Sunnites held the supreme power of the caliphate. The great majority of Muslims had adjusted themselves, under the caliphs, to the fact of human sinfulness. Orthodoxy maintained that the confession of faith was the fundamental requirement for belief, and that only God could judge the sincerity of that confession. Such a position, if taken to the Murjite extreme, could seriously endanger religious ethics, since it follows that the confession takes precedence over good and bad action. This the Shiites realized, and it formed the basis for much of their agitation against the unworthy Sunnite caliphs.

Human nature.--The creed of Shaykh Sadûq treats the subject of the nature of man in much the same way that orthodoxy does. The

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[1]Asaf A. A. Fyzee, A Shi'ite Creed ("Islamic Research Association Series, No. 9"; London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 54-55.

[2]Ibid., p. 55.

one significant difference lies in the fact that man in his natural condition, fitra, is not capable of independently following the true religion, but he is capable of following the guidance of the imâm. However, this favorable natural predisposition can only be effective under certain conditions:

> Imâm Mûsâ b. Ja'far al-Kâzim said, when he was asked: Has a human being (lit. slave) capacity? He said: Yes, provided he possesses four characteristics--(he should be) free in respect of action; in good health; complete in possession of limbs; and in the possession of capacity given him by Allah. Now when all these qualities coexist, then the man is said to be capable (mustâti').
>
> And Imâm Ja'far as-Sâdiq was asked concerning the saying of Allah, the Mighty and Glorious: "And they had been summoned to prostrate themselves while they were yet unhurt." He said: (That is) they were capable of action as they were commanded and of abstaining from that which was prohibited, and for this reason they were tested.[1]

The Imamate.--In the doctrine of the Imamate, Shiism has produced one of its most distinctive features. As the spiritual and temporal head of the Shiite community, the imâm is indispensable. His role is of much greater religious significance than that of the Sunnite caliph:

> [The imâm of the Shiites] is infallible and thus competant to teach and to guide. The existence of the imâm cannot be dispensed with. The imamate is a necessary institution--necessary in the sense that it constitutes the organ through which divine guidance manifests itself on earth at any given moment. No reconciliation is conceivable between the idea of the caliph as it was evolved by the majority of the so-called Sunnîs--an executive charged with the defence of the faith and the faithful--and the idea of the imâm as it was promulgated by the shî'at 'Alî, the party of 'Alî, the Shiites. This imâm is not only a ruler; he is a teacher and heir to the prophetic office. He is more than a mere mortal man. His function as ruler is not acquired; it is innate.[2]

The scriptural derivation of this doctrine has been cited

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[1] Ibid., p. 41.

[2] Von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, p. 187.

by Sell:

> The Qur'ánic authority for it is found in the verse, 'When the Lord made trail of Abraham by commands which he fulfilled, he said, "I am about to make thee an Imám to mankind." He said, "of my offspring also?" "My covenant," said God, "embraceth not evil doers"' (Súratu'l-Baqara ii, 118). From this verse two doctrines are deduced. First, that the Imám must be appointed by God, for, if this is not the case, why did Abraham say 'of my offspring also.' Second, the Imám is free from sin, for God said, 'My covenant embraceth not the evil doers.'[1]

The creedal statements concerning the character of the imâm go into greater detail. Shaykh Sadûq says:

> Our belief regarding them is that they are in authority. It is to them that Allah ordained obedience, they are the witnesses for the people and they are the gates of Allah (abwâb) and the road (sabîl) to Him and the guides (dalîl) thereto, and the repositories of His knowledge and the interpreters of His revelations and the pillars of His unity (tawhîd). They are immune from sins (khatâ') and errors (zalal); they are those from whom "Allah has removed all impurity and made them absolutely pure," they are possessed of (the power of) miracles and of (irrefutable) arguments (dalâ'il); they are for the protection of the people of this earth just as the stars are for the inhabitants of the heavens. They may be likened, in this community, to the Ark of Noah; he who boards it obtains salvation or reaches the Gate of Repentance (hitta).[2]

In another creed, written about four hundred years later, it is stated that the imâm is necessary, must be immune from sin, must be specified, and must be the best person of his age.[3]

Being the best person of his age is possible for the imâm partly because he possesses more than the ordinary human nature of the rest of mankind. The soul of the imâm consists of a special

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[1]Edward Sell, Studies in Islam (London: Church Missionary Society, 1928), p. 68.

[2]Fyzee, op. cit., p. 96.

[3]'Allâma-i-Hillî, Al-Bâbu 'l-Hâdî 'Ashar, with commentary by Miqdâd-i-Fâdil al-Hillî, trans. William McE. Miller ("Oriental Translation Fund N. S. Vol. XXIX"; London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1928), pp. 54-61.

nature; containing the nur-i-Muhammad, light of Muhammad:

> He [the imâm] differs in substance from the rest of mankind. The spark of divine light that, from Creation, has passed from prophet to prophet until it was held by the common grandfather of Mohammed and 'Alî is now part of the spiritual substance of 'Alî and his descendants. This spark marks out its bearer as the imâm of his age. It cleanses him of sinfulness. It endows him with superior powers of mind and heart.[1]

In addition to the role and status of the imâm in this world, his soteriological role is of utmost value. However, the creeds are usually more restrained in their estimate of the value of intercession and mediation than are the statements contained in the ta'ziya and marthiya. Shaykh Sadûq says that the right of intercession is no unique privilege of Husain, or even of all of the imams, but that "the least of believers will be liable to intercede on behalf of 30,000."[2] He also quotes the Prophet as saying that "no mediator (shafî') is more successful than repentance (tawba)."[3] But later on in his Risâlatu'l-I'tiqâdât Sadûq reveals a narrower outlook, when he discusses Purgatory (al-A'râf) and the Bridge (as-Sirât):

> Says Shaykh Abû Ja'far: Our belief concerning al-A'râf.... is that it is a wall between Paradise and Hell, and upon it there will be "men who will recognize all (persons) by their peculiar marks." These men will be the Prophet and his awsiyâ' [the twelve imams]. No one will be able to enter the Garden except he who recognizes them and him whom they recognize.[4]
>
> According to another view, as-sirât means the name of the Imâms (literally, proofs) of Allah. And to him who knows them and obeys them in this world, Allah will grant permission (to traverse) the path, which is the bridge over Hell, on the Day of Resurrection--the Day of Regret and Contrition. And the

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[1]Von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, p. 187.

[2]Fyzee, op. cit., p. 68.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 71.

> Prophet said to 'Alî: O 'Alî, on the Day of Resurrection, I shall sit near the bridge with you and Gabriel, and no one will cross the Bridge unless he can produce a writ (of absolution) by reason of devotion (walâya) to you.[1]

By the seventeenth century the belief that the imams are the only intercessors for the believers was firmly enough established to receive expression in creedal form. Majlisi wrote: "The Imams are the mediators between God and mankind. Except by their intercession it is impossible for men to avoid the punishment of God."[2]

Husain, the Shiite Savior

Although Shiite theology has, on the whole, been rather restrained in the claims made for Husain, Shiite piety, as expressed at the time of Muharram, has exalted him to the pinnicle of humanity, even more than it has Muhammad. This will be seen as we examine the ta'ziya in translation.

Charismatic elements.--The question of the operation of sociological charisma in the historical personality of Husain is one whose answer has been obscured by time, since reliable records are not available. However, the element of personal charisma must have been rather strong, since the legitimist movement, based on the genealogical inheritance of the 'Alids, had gone through a development of more than twenty years. It is significant that Husain, himself, at the battle of Kerbela, seems to have depended for pro-

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[1] Ibid., p. 72.

[2] Muhammad Bakir Majlisi, Hayatu'l-Kulub, Book III, chap. 1, sec. 7; cited by Dwight M. Donaldson, The Shiite Religion (London: Luzac & Co., 1933), p. 344.

tection upon the inviolability of his own person, an idea most certainly associated with a certain amount of charisma.

The charismatic milieu probably was in evidence, too, and particularly at Kerbela, where almost every detail of the event has taken on a numinous dimension in Shiite piety.

Doctrinal elements.--The richest source of popular Shiite theology is the ta'ziya. Its bare framework of crude properties, repetitious action, and stilted speech is enlarged by a vast amount of dogmatic material concerning the sacrifice, which made Husain the intercessor for mankind.

To what extent does Husain communicate the sensus numinis to his followers? Using Otto's criteria of mysterium tremendum, awesomeness, and mysterium fascinosum, fascination, it is evident that Husain has genuine numinous qualities. The overwhelming sympathetic response to the ta'ziya indicates that the second criterion is predominant, but tremendum is present, too. Husain's supernatural stature is sharply highlighted throughout, and the enemies of the imâm address him with utmost respect; even Shimr as he approaches to assassinate him.

The movement within moderate Shiism to exalt Husain never did go so far as to claim divine status for him, although an occasional passage in the ta'ziya does hint at the idea. The following example is taken from the scene in which 'Alî Zain-al-'Âbidîn, the son of Husain the the fourth imâm, reproaches Yazîd for mistreating the head of the Prince of Martyrs:

> Imám 'Abid-dín.--Dost thou think thou hast killed only Husain, and stained only his body with blood? It is not so. Thou hast slain the seven fathers and four brothers, the three

> daughters and six brothers. Thou hast murdered both the Prophet and his successor; thou hast massacred both Muhammad and 'Alî at once. According to the outward appearance thou hast not slain above one soul, but in reality thou hast killed the inhabitants both of this world and the next. Thou hast wiped away both entity and nonentity, both eternity and time. Thou hast killed all creation in one blow, O infidel; thou hast shed the blood of God, O impudent wretch.[1]

This passage has the doctrinal flavor of the extreme Shiite groups, e.g. the Ismâ'îlites, who teach a fully developed doctrine of divine incarnation. But in spite of incarnational trends within moderate Shiism, it is interesting to note that the Shiite doctrine of Saviorhood does not require it.

The tenth century creed of Shaykh Sadûq reveals that the Shiite theologians tried to combat such developments at that time. Although the following excerpt is probably designed to discredit the claims of the Ismâ'îlites, it probably served, also, to restrain such claims within his own group:

> And Imâm 'Alî ar-Ridâ, on whom be peace, used to say in his prayer: . . . O God, he who asserts that we (the Imâms) have the power of creation and of providing (for mankind), we (Imâms) seek absolution similar to that of Jesus, son of Mary, in respect to the Christians. O God, we have never called upon them to assert what they do assert; so do not punish us for what they say and forgive us for what they allege.[2]

The three important elements of the Savior story, as outlined by Van der Leeuw, are well illustrated in the ta'ziya.

The Birth and Epiphany of Husain are closely identified, since he is a member of the Prophet's family. His birth, itself, was miraculous, in that his mother, Fâtima, continued to be a virgin.[3]

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[1]Pelly, op. cit., II, 218-219.

[2]Fyzee, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

[3]Pelly, op. cit., I, 88-89.

The Deed of Salvation consisted of the great act of voluntary death for the sake of the faithful. As such, it contains several interesting facets. The Shiites, of course, in attaching such supreme importance to the massacre at Kerbela--the salvation of the believers is impossible without his intercession--are faced with an important theological problem. In the first place, because of the crucial importance of the event, it was something that had been planned by God from the beginning. There are many passages indicating this, of which the following prophecy of coming events by Muhammad will serve as an illustration:

> The Prophet.--O Husain, thou art shedding blood from thine eyes, come near, my grandson, for thy story is very long. Come hither, for thou art indeed my real grandchild. All the inhabitants of the two worlds, whether men or jinns, are sunk in sin, and have only one, Husain, to save them.
>
> Husain.--What is thy order, grandfather? I am quite ready to obey it. What is the service that I must perform?
>
> The Prophet.--Dear child, I am going to tell thee the story of Karbalá. Oh! I do not know how to say it, seeing thy afflictions are so many. Tell me, child, wilt thou suffer troubles, or not? Wilt thou go to Karbalá submissively, or not?
>
> Husain.--I will not only go to Karbalá, but to any spot thou mayest command. But may I ask what thou meanest?[1]

The Prophet now tells Husain about the trials he is to undergo and the suffering he is to bear. Husain expresses his willingness to "undergo what thou hast said, be it ever so hard."[2]

In addition to the prophecies of the event, there are other scenes in which the hand of God is actually guiding the action in order to bring it to its awaited climax. Such is the gist of these words of Gabriel addressed to an angel, who wanted to go to the aid of the imâm:

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[1] Ibid., p. 89

[2] Ibid.

> Attend to me and note this comprehensive saying, "What God ordains is for the benefit of all." Certainly the Creator of the world knows better than thou or myself. The Almighty has so ordained that it shall happen; from this circumstance, Husain's mediation will be proved, and the salvation of his fellow creatures be effected through his martyrdom.[1]

Earlier, in the episode of Hasan's death, Husain is prevented twice from bringing his life to a premature end; first, when he thought of taking the remainder of the poison which killed Hasan, and next, when his step-brother, Muhammad Hanîfa, wanted to join battle with their enemies immediately.

Faced with the inevitableness of Husain's murder, one has to ask whether the caliph and his generals can honestly be held responsible for doing something that was in accordance with the ordinance of God? If the players in this cosmic drama were nothing but puppets, whose actions were beyond their own control, how can the Sunnites be justifiably blamed for Husain's death?

While the mass of Shiites, whose veneration of the <u>imâm</u> took precedence over all else, did not concern themselves with such a problem, the Shiite theologians did. This is how one of them viewed it:

> This is our belief concerning (Allah's) Intention and (His) Will. Our opponents denounce us for this, saying that according to our belief, Allah intends (that man should commit) crimes and that He desired the murder of Husayn b. 'Alî, on whom be peace. This is not what we believe. But we say that Allah desired that the sin of sinners should be contradistinguished from the obedience of those who obey, that He desired that sins, viewed as actions, should not be ascribed to Him, even before the commission thereof.
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> And we hold that Allah's wish was that the murder of Husayn should be a sin against Him and the opposite of obedience. And we say that Allah intended that his (Husayn's) murder should be prohibited, and something which was not commanded. And we say

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, II, 49.

> that his murder was not the cause of His approval, and that Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, did not desire to prevent the murder by means of (His) compulsion or power, but merely by prohibition and word. And if He prohibited it by (His) compulsion and power, even as he prevented by prohibition and word, surely he would have escaped being murdered, just as Abraham was saved from the fire,.when Allah, the most Exalted, said to the fire in which he (Abraham) was thrown: "O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham."
>
> And we say that Allah always knew that Husayn would be killed by force, and by such death attain merit, and his murderer, everlasting wretchedness.[1]

Another important aspect of the sacrifice of Husain was the voluntary nature of the deed. The fact that the imâm willingly went through with the ordeal, even though he knew the details of that terrible day in advance, increased the value of the sacrifice.

A question which can be raised in this regard is that of the nature of the resistance offered by Husain against his oppressors; doesn't this detract from the voluntary nature of his death? Wouldn't it have been better for him to have delivered himself over peacefully to Shimr to be killed?

Shiite replies to such questions would maintain that the only honorable death on the battlefield is one in which a man is defending himself and his family. This Husain did, even though he knew all along that his death was inevitable. In reality, the voluntary nature of the sacrifice was increased by the fact that Husain refused the help--help which most certainly would have saved the day--of two spiritual agents, the angels and the jinns:

> Gabriel [speaking to the angel].-- . . . If, however, thou art grieved at this occurance, go to his assistance, for thou hast permission. Descend to the earth and comfort Husain, and, if he consent to receive aid, help him.
>
> The Angel.--May I be a sacrifice for thee, O thou offspring

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[1]Fyzee, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

of the Holy City, thou stranger in the valley of Karbalá, thou beloved of the Prophet! Thy cries have reached the heavens, and I have come to earth to save thee, O thou descendent of the Prophet; if thou permittest, I shall upset the world in a moment.

Husain.--O ye assembly of angels, whose eyes are moist with tears, ye seem to be unaware of the secret of the matter. The Lord is my protector and friend in this calamity, and He alone. I care not for any other but God, and Him alone. If you destroy the enemy and take vengence, what benefit can it be now? The work that I had to do is well-nigh finished.[1]

Following this speech, Husain conducts the angel around the battlefield, pointing out the mutilated corpses of all his dea ones. Then, as he prepares to enter the fray, he puts the temptation of gaining worldly power behind him:

The Imám (mounting).--Granted that hereafter the crown were placed on my head; that one quarter of the inhabited world were to come under my sovereignty, and the universe subservient to me; that Alexander the Great were to obey my orders, and I were to have the two worlds under my control; that even the Prophet Solomon were to consent to be my doorkeeper; granted all this, verily, after the death of these youths, to reign would be torture. The crown of the king would feel like a pan of fire on my head.[2]

But the final temptation to save himself is presented to Husain at the very moment when Shimr is preparing to strike him down. Husain is alone, when suddenly there appears to him "a man . . . having a human countenance, but the arms, legs, and body of a horse."[3]

Ja'far (the king of the jinns, with his troops, coming to Husain's assistance).--O king of men and jinns, O Husain, peace be on thee! O judge of corporeal and spiritual beings, peace be on thee!

Husain.--On thee be peace, thou handsome youth! Who art thou, that salutest us at such a time? Though thine affairs

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[1]Pelly, op. cit., II, 49. [2]Ibid., p. 51.

[3]Jaffur Shurreef, Qanoon-e-Islam, trans. G. A. Herklots (2d ed.; Madras: Higginbotham and Co., 1895), p. 109.

are not hidden from me at all, still it is advisable to ask thy name.

Ja'far.--O lord of men and jinns, I am the least of thy servants, and my name is Ja'far, the chief ruler of all the tribes of jinns. Today, while I was sitting on the glorious throne of my majesty, easy in mind, without any sad idea or thought whatever, I suddenly did hear thy voice when thou didst sadly implore assistance; and on hearing thee, I lost my patience and sense. And, behold, I have come out with troops of jinns, of various abilities and qualifications, to lend thee help, if necessary.

Husain.--In the old abbey of this perishable kingdom, none can ever, O Ja'far, attain to immortality. What can I do with the empire of the world, or with its tempting glories, after my dear ones have all died and gone? Is it proper that I, an old man, should life, and Akhbar, a blooming youth, die in the prime of age? Return thou, Ja'far, to thy home, and weep for me as much as thou canst.[1]

Husain's time has now come. Shimr is at hand with his dagger. While the Prophet, Fâtima, and Zainab look on, the murder is committed, and Husain is dead.

Resurrection and Parousia are depcited in the final scene. Although the climax, as far as the action of the drama is concerned, lies in the murder scene, the Last Days episode is the final climax of Shiite soteriological doctrine. The speeches of the players are full of dogmatic material; much of it of key importance.

As the scene opens, there is some uncertainty as to who will be granted the key of intercession. It is clear that the followers of Muhammad, i.e. the Sunnites, are suffering in Hell, along with the other sinners. As a consequence, Muhammad has cast aside his turban, cloak, and rod--all insignia of his prophetic office--asking what has to be done to save them. Gabriel replies that salvation can only be had through intercession. He states the qualifications of the intercessor to be, as follows:

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[1]Pelly, op. cit., II, 98-100.

> Peace be unto you, Muhammad, thou elect of God, the merciful Lord has sent thee greetings, saying, "Heave not such burning sighs from thy breast. He who has seen most trials, endured most afflictions, and been most patient in his sufferings, the same shall win the privilege of intercession. He shall raise the standard of intercession on the Day of Judgment who hath voluntarily put his head under the sword of trial, ready to have it cloven in two like the point of a pen. Thou take this key of intercession from me and give it to him who has undergone the greatest trials.[1]

Here is stated the theological position of the Shiites in this matter of the Savior--he shall intercede who "has undergone the greatest trials." The right to intercede is a work of merit; earned by Husain over all other candidates.

This, then, is the other side of the claim to a position of pre-eminence for the Family of the Cloak. Originally, they were superior by virtue of their genealogy; their spiritual inheritance. Now, it is apparant that they have earned that position through their many sufferings. One formulation of this point of view is contained in the concept of the "proofs" of suffering, which will be presented by the Family of the Cloak before the throne of God. Muhammad died a natural death in bed, so the only proof he can offer will be a tooth he has broken. 'Alî will present his turban, which is stained with blood from his assassination; Hasan will offer his liver, which shows the effects of the poison; Fâtima's proof will be a miscarriage she suffered under the rough handling of the caliph's troops; Husain will offer his bloody shirt.[2]

Continuing with the final scene, the only one to offer com-

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[1] Ibid., p. 343.

[2] J. Davidson Frame, "The Religious Life of the Persians," The Moslem World, Vol. VII (1917), p. 180.

petition to Husain for the role of intercessor is Jacob, who points to the suffering he has endured because of the mistreatment of Joseph. Muhammad, himself, soon realizes that Husain is worthier than he, and before long, Jacob has to retire also, in the face of the overwhelming evidence brought forward by Husain. The moment of ultimate victory for Husain and the Shiites has arrived:

> Gabriel.--Peace be unto thee, O Muhammad the elect, God hath sent thee a message, saying, "None has suffered the pain and affliction which Husain has undergone. None has, like him, been obedient in my service. As he has taken no steps save in sincerity in all he has done, thou must put the key of Paradise in his hand. The privilege of making intercession for sinners is exclusively his. Husain is, by my peculiar grace, the mediator for all."[1]

Thus, Husain has qualified as the sole intercessor for mankind. He holds the key to Paradise, and none can enter save those whom he recognizes. Turning to Husain, Muhammad says:

> Good tidings, O Husain! act thou according to thy will. Behold the fulfillment of God's promise. Permission has proceded from the Judge, the Gracious Creator, that I should give to thy hand this key of intercession. Go thou and deliver from the flames every one who has in his life-time shed but a single tear for thee, every one who has performed a pilgrimage to thy shrine or mourned for thee, and every one who has written tragic verses for thee. Bear each and all with thee to Paradise.
>
> Husain.--O my friends, be ye relieved from grief, and come along with me to the mansions of the blest. Sorrow has passed away, it is now time for joy and rest; trouble has gone by, it is the hour to be at ease and tranquility.
>
> The Sinners (entering Paradise).--God be praised! by Husain's grace we are made happy, and by his favour we are delivered from destruction. By Husain's loving-kindness is our path decked with roses and flowers. We were thorns and thistles, but are now made cedars owing to his merciful intercession.[2]

And the play ends.

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[1]Pelly, op. cit., II, 347.

[2]Ibid., pp. 347-348.

A Modern Indian Development

Certain highly self-conscious and aggresively missionary segments of Indian Shiism have embarked on a new venture in the propagation of their faith. An active center for this new apologetic is the Madrasat-ul-Wâ'izîn, School for Preachers, which is located in Lucknow, and has been publishing the new Shiite literature in a quarterly magazine, The Muslim Review.

Islam reinterpreted.--The several interesting aspects of this Indian movement can be rightfully seen under the general effort to reinterpret Islam in the light of modern Western knowledge. It seems evident that rationalistic humanism has been adopted by this group as the foundation for the new Shiism, although it is maintained that the values of this humanism have actually been the true essence of Islam from the very beginning. As it is to be expected, the supernatural and soteriological dimensions of traditional Islam and Shiism have been de-emphasized almost to the point of complete elimination. Although God is still very much a reality, his revelation, the Koran, is to be interpreted rationalistically--a method common in certain segments of modern Protestantism. This is made clear in the following excerpts from an article by a frequent contributor to the quarterly:

> The function of religion is to humanize man. Without religion, man would remain a beast. In fact, before the discovery of religion by man, he lived like an animal without laws and morality. The introduction of the ethical element in human society marks the beginning of the humanization of man; for after all religion is morality in theory and morality is religion in practice.[1]

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[1]S. M. Fossil, "Islam--Its Ideals and Institutions," The Muslim Review, Vol. XXXI (August, 1941), p. 38.

> Religion is necessary for human happiness, peace and progress.[1]
>
> The Quran is a book of guidance, a complete code of life. Those who acted up to its teachings were able to bring about the greatest revolution social, political, economic, moral and spiritual. Human history records only two great revolutions after the advent of Islam--one the French Revolution and the other the Bolshevik Revolution. All that was best in [the] French Revolution was borrowed from the teachings of Islam. Liberty, Fraternity and equality were the war cries and watchwords of Islam. . . . Both these revolutions failed to touch the deeper springs of humanity. Man was not the measure for them [since they both concerned themselves with bourgeois culture; one for and the other against]. Islam never bothered itself with an particular system. It sought to transform men; to transmute baser instincts into nobler ones. It sublimated man from the lower levels of bestiality to the loftier heights of divinity.[2]
>
> Islam brought about the greatest intellectual revolution by the enthronement of reason. Three constituent elements of every religion are faith (or belief), hope and love. Remove reason from them and they become meaningless. Belief ceases to be belief, if one believes the unbelievable; hope ceases to be hope, if one hopes for the hopeless and love ceases to be love, if one loves the unloveable. These three constituent elements of religion are meaningless unless they are applied rationally; and they cease to be useful unless they are practiced which means action. Hence, the emphasis of Islam on "Amal" or action.
>
> The institutions of Islam are so planned and arranged as to enable one to achieve these high ideals. Prayers, fast, Zakat and Haj, the main and cardinal institutions of Islam are not merely intended to enable one to attain salvation of one's soul but also to help one to lead a good and useful life as a member of human society.[3]

Along with this positive emphasis, the new Islam is outlined in sharp contrast to the clericalism and superstitiousness of modern Christianity.

Husain, the leader of all humanity.--Husain emerges completely transformed from the individual who is the chief figure of the creeds and the ta'ziya. Rather than dying voluntarily to earn

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[3] Ibid., p. 41.

the right to intercede on Judgment Day for sinful mankind, Husain died to save Islam, which insured the victory of right over wrong, of good over evil:

> Islam was under the shadow of all that was unIslamic; Husain saw that to let things take their course would mean the complete disappearance of Islam from the face of the earth. The Prophet his grandfather knew that a day will soon come when Islam would come to such a pass; he promised God that he would offer the greatest sacrifice to bring back Islam to its old glory; for this sacrifice he chose Husain, who readily promised to fulfil its task, and who really fulfilled it in the way the whole world knew.[1]

Or, Husain's death can be taken as a great symbol of the way in which man is oppressed:

> The cause for which Hazrat Imam Husain made sacrifices was a noble one. He wanted to bring back to the world the fact that so long as there was "man's inhumanity to man," there was no future for the human race. His sole object was to humanize man by supressing the bestial and sublimating the divine in him. In short, he strove to inculcate in everyone love for the oppressed and hatred of the oppressor.[2]

As such a symbol, Husain's significance is universal. He rightfully belongs to the world, and not to just one religion or sect:

> The martyrdom of Husain signifies victory of religion over heathenism, good over evil, Truth over Falsehood and Spirit over matter. And therefore the entire humanity might claim Husain as their own, without distinction of age or clime,[3] colour or country.
>
> "After the memory of every Karbala," wrote the late Maulana Mohammad Ali in a beautiful couplet in Urdu, "Islam emerges strengthened with renewed life." But why Islam only; why not

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[1]M. A. Salmin, "The Sacrifice at Karbala," The Muslim Review, Vol. XXIX (February, 1941), p. 5.

[2]S. M. Fossil, "Hazrat Imam Husain," The Muslim Review, Vol. XXIX (February, 1941), p. 35.

[3]Notice the use of Gibbon's phrase (see above, p. 4). These writers are familiar with and make use of the anti-Christian writers of Europe.

> the whole world of humanity, for even as an English writer has said that Husain is not only the Husain of Islam and the Muslims, he is the Husain of the whole world of humanity. We should cease to think [of] Husain in term[s] of religion; we should think of him as a man, a human being who offered every thing he had, even his family under the most heartless and tortuous circumstances, because he was fully conscious of the fact that his death in the cause of Righteousness at this stage would save a noble culture and a correct way of life to the people of the world. It is unfortunate that the name of religion should blur our outlook, and give us a sort of prearranged prejudice.[1]

The literature also contains many references comparing the sacrifice of Husain with that of Jesus, pointing out that Husain's carried more value because of the more trying circumstances under which he died.

Muharram.--A question which arises in connection with this new movement is the one concerning Muharram. How will this important commemoration fare under the new program? One answer to this question is found in the following excerpt:

> The very fact that the Tragedy of Kerbala is a landmark in the history of Islam is a sufficient reason for its commemoration every year even if there be no other reasons.
>
> Now, so far as forms of observances are concerned, they depend upon the taste of the age and the people. But nevertheless one fact is patent. Forms are necessary in this material world. Suggestions have been given from some quarters that on the Ashura-Day a general meeting should be held and in a way a resolution of sympathy should be passed. Will it be sufficient? No, it will not. Unless the salient features of the tragedy are depicted and the aims of the opposing parties are described the tragedy cannot be correctly appreciated. Majlises, Tazias, Alums, and processions are therefore absolutely necessary.[2]

A reaction to the new Shiism.--Such a radical re-alignment of traditional Shiism is bound to stir up opposition based on a

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[1]Ragunandan Prasad, "Husain--The Leader of the Entire Humanity," The Muslim Review, Vol. XXVII (July, 1940), p. 2.

[2]Syed Imtiaz Husain, "The Muharrum and the Reasons for Its Anniversary," The Muslim Review, Vol. XXIX (February, 1941), p. 30.

strong affirmation of the old theology and institutions. The following quotations are of particular interest, however, because the writer seems to have been profoundly influenced by Christian missionary literature. By substituting Christian references for the Muslim in these paragraphs, it would be possible to produce an article very similar in content to many Christian productions:

> Modernism has no place for the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Husain. The modern mind is unwilling to accept his death as a sacrificial death, and sees in it only an outstanding example of heroic devotion to a lost cause, an inspiration to us to do our best for the reform of society, even though it may cost us out lives.[1]

One of the shortcomings of modernism is its failure to recognize the true nature of sin:

> Sin is a tremendous fact. There is no excuse for sin. Sin is a transgression of God's commandments. Sin involves degradation of the whole being, a debasement of the inner life, a prostitution of the moral powers. Sin is the expression of a perverted nature in whatever form it may reveal itself. . . . Self-idolatry lies at the foundation of all sin.[2]

When we understand what sin is, we are able to grasp the true significance of the death of Husain:

> The simplest, and at the same time the most complete summary of the gospel of deliverance is found in these words, "Husain, peace be on him, bore our sins." He was brutally massacred for our transgressions, he presented all that was his at the holy altar of Karbala in atonement for our sins. He was humiliated for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and God hath laid on Hazrat Imam Husain the iniquities of us all. . . . Husain and his devoted comrades cheerfully bore the burden of our sin amidst the arrows, spears and swords in the bloody plain of Karbala. They were treated as we deserved to be treated. This is the essence of the good news. Husain (peace be on him) loved us and gave himself . . . for us.[3]

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[1]N. Hamid Husain Mirza, "Sin and Redeemer," The Muslim Review, Vol. XXVI (February, 1940), p. 33.

[2]Ibid., p. 35.

[3]Ibid., p. 33.

The blood sacrifices made by men for the remission of sins from the beginning of the world have all been in preparation for the one great sacrifice, which was to serve as the summation of them all:

> The fullness of time had come, all that was shadowy in the gospel of redemption through blood was to be replaced by the reality, and prophecy was to be realized in fact through the merciless slaughter of Hazrat Imam Husain on the burning sand of Karbala amidst direst pain and agony. Every one, who has read the Holy Quran, must have observed that the irreparable martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Husain had been presettled in a great bargain ere this world came into being. Further more it is plain from the record that his death was not to him an unfortunate ending of his career, an unforeseen and tragically fatal incident in his program of reform; but on the contrary, it was from the first recognized by him as a morally necessary part of his experience in the work that he came from heaven to do. The path marked out for him in the Divine Councils and portrayed by the prophets led directly to his martyrdom at Karbala. A vision of Karbala was vouchsafed in him, and he beheld himself as the lamb of God. In the light of these scenes his life became a living sacrifice and his death a foregone conclusion.[1]

In concluding this section, we can only say that it is extremely doubtful if the author of these paragraphs would be able to support his views by an accurate exegesis of the Shiite scriptures and traditions.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

APPENDIX I

TWO MUHARRAM ELEGIES

Edward G. Browne has translated and published portions of the works of two Shiite poets. His translations are given below.

The first is an excerpt from a haft-band by Muhtasham of Kâshân. This poet flourished at the time of the establishment of the Safavids at Isfahan, and the consequent rise of Shiism to official status. Muhtasham set the standard for the Muharram elegy.

When they summoned mankind to the table of sorrow, they first issued the summons to the hierarchy of the prophets.
When it came to the turn of the Saints, Heaven trembled at the blow which they smote on the head of the Lion of God.
Then they kindled a fire from the sparks of diamond dust and cast it on Hasan, the Chosen One.
They tore up from Madina and pitched at Karbala those pavilions to which even the angels were denied entrance.
Man tall palm trees from the grove of the "Family of the Cloak" did the people of Kufa fell in that plain with the axe of malice,
Many a blow whereby the heart of Mustafa was rent did they inflict on the thirst throat of Murtada 'Alí's successors.
While his women with collars torn and hair unloosed, raise the lament to the Sanctuary of Divine Majesty,
And the trusted Spirit [Gabriel] laid his head in shame on his knees, and the eye of the sun was darkened.

When the blood of his thirsty throat fell on the ground turmoil arose from the earth to the summit of God's high throne.
The Temple of Faith came nigh to ruin through the many fractures inflicted on the Pillars of Religion.
They cast to the ground his tall palm-tree even as the thorn bush; a deluge arose from the dust of the earth to heaven.
The breeze carried the dust to the Prophet's tomb: dust arose from Madina to the seventh heaven.
When the tidings of this reached Jesus dwelling in the heavenly sphere, he forthwith plunged his garments in indigo in the vat of heaven.

Heaven was filled with murmuring when the turn to cry out passed from the Prophets to the presence of the Trusted Spirit.
Mistaken imagination fancied that this dust even reached the skirts of the Creator's glory,
For although the essence of the All-glorious is exempt from vexation, He dwells in the heart and no heart remains unvexed.

I am afraid that when they record the punishment of his murder, they may forthwith strike the pen through the Book of Mercy.
I am afraid that the Intercessors on the Resurrection Day may be ashamed, by reason of this sin, to speak of the sins of mankind.
When the People of the House shall lay hands on the People of Tyranny, the hand of God's reproach shall come forth from its sleeve.
Alas for the moment when the House of 'Alí, with blood dripping from their winding-sheets, shall raise their standards from the dust like a flame of fire!
Alas for that time when the youths of that Holy House shall dash together their crimson shrouds on the Resurrection Plain!
That company, whose ranks were broken by the strife of Karbala, at the Resurrection in serried ranks will break the ranks of the uprisen.
What hopes from the Lord of the Sanctuary can those worthless ones entertain who wounded with their swords the quarry of the Sanctuary?
Then [finally] they raise on a spear-point that Head from whose locks Gabriel washed the dust with the water of Salsabil.[1]

The second of Browne's translations is a marthiya by the poet, Qa'ani, who died in 1853. Its form is very unusual:

What rains down? Blood! Who? The Eye! How? Day and Night!
Why? From grief! What grief? The grief of the Monarch of Karbala!
What was his name? Husayn! Of whose race? 'Alí's!
Who was his mother? Fatima! Who was his grandsire? Mustafa!
How was it with him? He fell a martyr! Where? In the plain of Mariya!
When? On the tenth of Muharram! Secretly? No, in public!
Was he slain by night? No, by day! At what time? At noontide!
Was his head severed from the throat? No, from the nape of the neck!
Was he slain unthirsting? No! Did none give him to drink? They did!

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[1]Browne, op. cit., pp. 175-177.

Who? Shimr! From what source? From the source of death!
Was he an innocent martyr? Yes! Had he committed any fault? No!
What was his work? Guidance! Who was his friend? God!
Who wrought this wrong? Yazid! Who is this Yazid?
One of the children of Hind! By whom? By bastard origin!
Did he himself do this deed? No, he sent a letter!
To whom? To the false son of Marjána!
Was Ibn Ziyad the son of Marjána? Yes!
Did he not withstand the words of Yazid? No!
Did this wretch slay Husayn with his own hand?
No, he dispatched an army to Karbala!
Who was the chief of this army? 'Umar ibn-Sa'd!
Did he cut down Fatima's dear fold? No, shameless Shimr!
Was not the dagger ashamed to cut his throat?
It was! Why then did it do so? Destiny would not excuse it!
Wherefore? In order that he might become an intercessor for mankind!
What is the condition of his intercession? Lamentation and weeping!
Were any of his sons also slain? Yes, two!
Who else? Nine brothers! Who else? Kinsmen!
Had he no other son? Yes, he had! Who was that?
"The Worshipper"! How fared he? Overwhelmed with grief and sorrow!
Did he remain at his father's side? No, he went to Syria!
In glory and honour? No, in debasement and distress!
Alone? No, with the women of the household! What were their names?
Zaynab, Sakina, Fatima and poor portionless Kulthum!
Had he any garments on his body? Yea, the dust of the road!
Had he any turban on his head? Yea, the staves of the wicked ones!
Was he sick? Yes! What medicine had he? The tears of his eyes!
What was his food after medicine? The food was heart's blood!
Did any bear him company? Yes, the fatherless children!
Who else was there? The fever which never left him!
What was left of the womens' ornaments? Two things!
The collar of tyranny on their necks, and the anklet of grief on their feet!
Would a pagan (gabar) practice such cruelty? No! A Magian or a Jew? No!
A Hindoo? No! An idolater? No! Alas for this harshness!
Is Qa'ani capable of such verses? Yes!
What seeks he? Mercy! From whom? From God! When? In the ranks of the recompense![1]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 180-181.

APPENDIX II

THREE POPULAR RELIGIOUS POEMS

Much of the popular religious sentiment connected with the Muharram commemoration is expressed in the form of short lyrical poems, which can be chanted. In contrast to the elegies, these popular songs are of small literary value in themselves. Each year new poems are composed, while those of the year before are forgotten. Occasionally, one catches the popular imagination, and becomes incorporated into the celebration of subsequent Muharrams. In Persia there is often competition among the various quarters of a city to determine which can produce the best poems.

The following poems are but three examples of the thousands of poems which have been in circulation in Persia. The first two were collected by Clara C. Edwards in Azerbaijan. The final poem was collected and translated by Samuel G. Wilson.

The Lion of Kerbela[1]

O Lion, come today to our help,
Help the children of Mustafa!

O Lion, strike your head today, burn it!
The people of the world are terrified.
This is Akhbar, stained with blood.
He set fire to the place of the prophet.
O Lion, come today to our help,

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[1]The title of this poem refers to the miraculous lion which was refused permission by Husain to die a martyr's death at Kerbela.

Help the children of Mustafa!

O Lion, this is the young Qasim,
The henna which colors his hand is blood.
What a cry, Alas, has started to the sky,
The children of Ali have met with disaster.
O Lion, come today to our help,
Help the children of Mustafa!

Come, pass by the place of slaughter,
Look at the corpses of the martyrs.
Go to the Lion of God, tell him,
Beg him to come to Kerbela.
O Lion, come today to our help,
Help the children of Mustafa!

This child Asqar, a nursling,
The arrow has torn his throat.
Look at his condition,
His father threw his blood in the air.
O Lion, come today to our help,
Help the children of Mustafa!

Look at Zainab, shelterless.
Shimr fired all the tents.
They killed the king who had no shelter.
Curses on the shameless people!
O Lion, come today to our help,
Help the children of Mustafa!

Look at the hill of Minah, flowing with
blood.
The mourners have made many wailings.
The young men coming to Qasim's wedding,
All are guests at this bloody mourning.
O Lion, come today to our help,
Help the children of Mustafa![1]

Zul Jenah[2]

Why do you neigh,
Why do you fix your eye on the
field of battle,
Unless your father is dead?
May we be your sacrifice, Zul Jenah.

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[1]Clara C. Edwards, "Two Popular Religious Poems in the Azerbaijani Dialect," Journal of the American Oriental Society, XXXIX, 115-116.

[2]Husain's horse, which goes riderless in the processions.

Why is your mane on the side,
Stained with color on one side,
Unless your father is dead?
May we be your sacrifice, Zul Jenah.

The light of Fatima's eyes,
The Leader of both worlds,
It is strange that you have not
brought Husain,
May we be your sacrifice, Zul Jenah.[1]

Kerbela this day has been despoiled.
Husain with his own blood is soiled.
Murder! By the hand of Shamr.
Cry out! By the hand of Shamr.

O shameless Shamr! Not at all abashed,
Ruthless against Husain you dashed.
Murder! By the hand of Shamr.
Cry out! By the hand of Shamr.

Surely the stones shall weep today!
Seventy and two were slain today!
Murder! By the hand of Shamr.
Cry out! By the hand of Shamr.

Hasan, Husain were like a flower.
Yezid fell in the filth of a sewer.
Murder! By the hand of Shamr.
Cry out! By the hand of Shamr.[2]

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[1]Edwards, op. cit., p. 114.

[2]Wilson, op. cit., p. 191.

APPENDIX III

THE EPISODES FROM THREE EUROPEAN TRANSLATIONS OF THE TA'ZIYA

Since there is no strict form for the ta'ziya, its length and contents varies considerably from time to time and location to location. As a consequence, each of the various European editions of the ta'ziya differs from the others. The most complete translation is Pelly's. The following list of episodes from Pelly's two-volume work reveals the structure of the play, while the episodes given by Chodzko (in French) and Litten (in German) serve as interesting comparisons:

Scene I. Joseph and his Brethren. [This scene is included in order to compare the suffering of Joseph with that of Husain.]

Scene II. Death of Ibráhím the son of Muhammad. [The Prophet grieved deeply for his son, and thus makes the point that to those who show pity, pity will be shown on the Day of Judgment.]

Scene III. The Disobedient Son. [Only Husain is successful in interceding on behalf of the lad who disobeyed his parents.]

Scene IV. Magnanimous offer of 'Alí to sacrifice his Life for a Fellow-creature. [The man who almost took 'Alí's life in order to gain a wife recognizes his true nature and becomes a Shiite.]

Scene V. Death of the Prophet Muhammad.

Scene VI. The Seizure of the Khalífat by Abú Bakr.

Scene VII. Death of Fátimah the Daughter of the Prophet Muhammad.

Scene VIII. The Martyrdom of 'Alí the Son of Abú Tálib.

Scene IX. The Martyrdom of Hasan the Son of 'Alí.

Scene X. The Martyrdom of Muslim the Envoy of Husain.

Scene XI. Murder of the Sons of Muslim. [The two boys hide in the house of a Sunnite, who turns them in for the reward being offered for their capture, thus violating the inviolable rules of hospitality.]

Scene XII. The Departure of Husain from Madínah on his way to Kúfah.

Scene XIII. Withdrawal of Husain from the road to Kúfah. [The entourage of the imâm encamp at Kerbela.]

Scene XIV. The Martyrdom of Húr. [Húr, who was with the enemy, comes over to Husain and dies for him.]

Scene XV. The Martyrdom of 'Abís and Shauzab in defence of Husain.

Scene XVI. A Night Assault on Husain's Camp.

Scene XVII. The Death of 'Alí Akbar. [Husain's eldest son was the first of the immediate family to die.]

Scene XVIII. Death of Kásim the Bridegroom. [Kâsim is married to Fâtima, the daughter of Husain, and is killed the same day.]

Scene XIX. Death of 'Abbas the Brother of Husain.

Scene XX. The Martyrdom of Háshim. [The angels offer their services to Husain, but he refuses their aid.]

Scene XXI. Rescue by Husain of Sultán Ghiyás from the jaws of a Lion. [Husain is transported to Hind to rescue a hunter, who is being threatened by a lion. The beast realizes that it was mistaken in attacking a Shiite, and begs to be allowed to join Husain at Kerbela. Husain says that it cannot become a martyr.]

Scene XXII. The Lamentations of Husain and his Family for the Loss of the Martyrs in Karbalá. [The women carry out mourning practices common during Muharram in modern Persia.]

Scene XXIII. Martyrdom of Husain.

Scene XXIV. The Camp at Karbalá after the Death of Husain.

Scene XXV. The Field of Karbalá after the Death of Husain. [The survivors start for Syria.]

Scene XXVI. Flight of Shahrbánú from the Plain of Karbalá.

Scene XXVII. Husain's faithless Camel-driver. [The scene includes the arrival of Sulaiman's army too late to be of assistance.]

Scene XXVIII. Release of Fátimah owing to the intervention of the Persians.

Scene XXIX. Despatch of Husain's Family as Captives to Syria. [Many miracles take place in connection with the head of Husain, which is being taken to Yezid.]

Scene XXX. Arrival of Husain's Family at Damascus. [Yezid heaps insults upon them.]

Scene XXXI. Conversion and Murder of the Ambassador from Europe. [He becomes a Shiite when he sees how the caliph is mistreating his innocent prisoners.]

Scene XXXII. Death of Rukayyah the Daughter of Husain. [The girl asks God to forgive all who weep over her death.]

Scene XXXIII. Release of Husain's Family from Captivity.

Scene XXXIV. Death of Zainab. [When the family returns to Medina, the inhabitants welcome 'Ali Zain-al-'Abidin as their imâm. Yezid hears of it and puts the family into captivity again.]

Scene XXXV. Conversion of a Christian Lady to the Muhammadan Faith. [The lady, who is struck with the beauty of Kerbela, dreams twice of Husain and witnesses his assumption of the role of Intercessor. She sees Fâtima, and embraces the Shiite religion.]

Scene XXXVI. Conversion of King Caniah. [He is a Christian ruler, who forbids the practice of the rites of Muharram by his Shiite subjects. Husain intervenes, and the king, after being tortured by angels, begs for mercy and becomes a Muslim.]

Scene XXXVII. The Resurrection. [On the Day of Judgment Husain qualifies over all the other candidates, including Muhammad, to act as Intercessor for sinners.][1]

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[1]Pelly, op. cit., Vols. I and II.

The episodes given by Chodzko follow roughly the scheme of Pelly's translation:

Mystère	I.	Le messager d'Allah, ou l'archange Gabriel annoncant au Prophète Mohammed que ses deux petits-fils doivent mourir en martyrs.
Mystère	II.	La Mort du Prophète.
Mystère	III.	Le Jardin de Fathema, fille du Prophète.
Mystère	IV.	La Mort de Fathema.
Mystère	V.	Le Martyre de d'Aly.
Mystère	VI.	Le Martyre de l'imam Hassan.
Mystère	VII.	Même sujet.
Mystère	VIII.	Le Départ de Muslim, fils d'Aqil, pour la ville de Koufa.
Mystère	IX.	Le Martyre des enfants de Muslim.
Mystère	X.	Le Martyre des adolescents.
Mystère	XI.	Le Départ de l'imam Hussein de la Mecque.
Mystère	XII.	Hour arrive sur le chemin de l'imam Hussein.
Mystère	XIII.	Même sujet.
Mystère	XIV.	L'imam Hussein implore la pitié des méchants.
Mystère	XV.	Même sujet.
Mystère	XVI.	L'imam Hussein s'égare dans le désert.
Mystère	XVII.	Le Martyre d'Abbas.
Mystère	XVIII.	Le Martyre d'Aly Ekber.
Mystère	XIX.	Le Martyre de Qassim.
Mystère	XX.	Le Martyre des enfants de Zeineb.
Mystère	XXI.	Fathema Sogra envoie des fleurs de Médine à Kerbéla.
Mystère	XXII.	Fathema Sogra écrit une lettre à son frère.
Mystère	XXIII.	Le Martyre d'Aly Esgar.

Mystère XXIV. Le Martyre de l'imam Hussein.

Mystère XXV. Les Mânes des prophètes antérieurs viennent visiter le cadavre de l'imam Hussein.

Mystère XXVI. Les Femmes de la tribu Béni-Essed apportent de l'eau pour les gens de Harem de l'imam Hussein.

Mystère XXVII. Sékina se rend au camp de Ben-Séad et lui demande la permission d'enterrer les corps des martyrs.

Mystère XXVIII. Les Orphelins de l'imam Hussein sur son tombeau.

Mystère XXIX. Kâtib et Vélid.

Mystère XXX. Un monastère de moines européens.

Mystère XXXI. Les Arabes de la tribu Ibn-Essek inhument les martyrs.

Mystère XXXII. Même sujet que celui de mystère XXX.

Mystère XXXIII. La Famille de l'imam Hussein envoie de ses nouvelles à Médine.[1]

The ta'ziya episodes which Litten collected and copied were published untranslated, except for their titles:

1. Das Stueck, wie Abraham den Isma'il Gott opfert.
2. Das Stueck, von dem Vogel, der nach Medina fleigt und den Bewohnern von Medina die Nachricht vom Tode des Imams bringt, und die Heilung des juedischen Maedchens.
3. Das Stueck vom Tode des Herrn der Maertyrer (Gottes Segen auf ihn) in der Ebene des heiligen Kerbela.
4. Das Stueck vom Tode des h. 'Abbas-'Ali (unsre Seele sei dein Opfer).
5. Das Stueck von Chuli, der das Haupt steckt, und die Erscheinung des Propheten und der Fatima.
6. Elftes Stueck ueber die Umstaende des Todes von Wahb, seinen Abschied von seiner Familie und seinen Tod.

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[1]A. Chodzko, Théâtre persan; cited by Litten, op. cit., pp. xiii-xiv.

7. Das Stueck von der Christenfrau, die nach der Ebene des heiligen Kerbela kommt, dort mehrere Wunder erlebt und durch Fatima (gegruesst sei sie) zum Islam bekerht wird.

8. Das Stueck, wie der h. Herr der Maertyrer in der Ebene von Kerbela in der Zehner-Nacht den Schaemaer, Sohn des Panzertraegers, um eine Frist der schamlosen Leute von Kufa bittet.

9. Das Stueck von der Hochzeit der saehra (Zahra)(Fatima) in Medina.

10. Das Stueck, wie der Prophet gegen seiner Eltern Willen in die Einsamkeit geht und die Tuer seines Argers schliesst.

11. Das Stueck vom nachtblinden Suleiman, der Ueberrumpelung des Heeres des Ibn Zijad (Obeidullah)(Fluch und Pein auf ihn!) und der Bekehrung seinder Haeuptlinge.

12. Das Stueck von dem Europaeer-Koenig Qania.

13. Das Stueck von der Perlmutter-Perle.

14. Das Stueck vom Imam Dsha'far Sadiq.

15. Emir Timur.[1]

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[1]Litten, op. cit., pp. xv-xvii.

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